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[Doctorate by Public Works]

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**DPsych by Public Works**

**Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University**

**Volume 1: Context Statement**

**Enhancing the wellbeing and prospects of  
children and their families through training:  
from practice (doing) to theory (thinking) and  
back again**

***The development of a professional qualifications  
department in a service delivery organisation***

**Niki Cooper**

**Student Number M00458117**

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- 9. Ellis, E. & Cooper, N. (2013) 'Silenced: the Black Student Experience' *Therapy Today (December 2013)* Vol 24 Issue10**
- 10. Conference presentation for Child City Health Forum. September 16<sup>th</sup> 2014. *Mental Health in Schools: Everyone's Business***
- 11. Niki Cooper. Blogs Place2Be Website ([www.place2be.org.uk](http://www.place2be.org.uk) 3.7.13 & 25.10.13)**

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My family has had to put up with a frequently preoccupied and absent mother, wife and daughter for the past couple of years whilst I have engaged in this doctoral process. Husband and soul mate Simon, is my rock, and daughters Billie, Grace and Maud have sustained me with love, laughter and no nonsense and that has kept me sane. Finally a big thank you to Mum and Dad: I took a circuitous route but I got there in the end.



## Chapter 1. Introduction

*'There was a little girl*

*Who had a little curl*

*Right in the middle of her forehead.*

*When she was good, she was very, very good*

*When she was bad she was horrid.'*

I was a confused and anxious child. My behaviour was labelled irritating and overbearing and I was left with the belief that I was mostly 'horrid' and just too much for some adults. I had to work hard to make sense of my world and evolved lots of strategies, successful and unsuccessful, to do that. It is logical that I have found my place and mission in a children's mental health charity. The creation of the Public Works presented here has been my most successful strategy so far. I have discovered what I am good at and how to participate most fruitfully in society. I have learnt that being only 'very, very good' is exhausting and impossible. I can be both good and horrid and still ok. I have been able to use my history as an enlivening rather than oppressing force to 'enhance the well-being and prospects of children' (Mission Statement, Place2Be). I know from my own experience that confused and anxious children can elicit negative and unhelpful responses from adults around them and this can erode confidence and limit prospects. Children need a place to be heard and held. Place2Be<sup>1</sup> is the UK's leading provider of

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<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1994, Place2Be is a charity that delivers an accessible, early intervention mental health service for children and their families in schools around the UK.

In 2014/15 Place2Be is working in over 270 schools across England, Wales & Scotland, supporting a population of 80,000 children. Our Clusters of 8 – 12 schools in an area are found in Brent, Cardiff, Croydon, Durham, Ealing, East Lancashire, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Enfield, Glasgow, Greenwich, Harlow, Leeds, Manchester, Medway, Northumberland, Nottingham, Southwark, Shoreditch and Wandsworth.

emotional support services to children and young people in schools. Since 2007 I have been the Leader of Professional Qualifications there. I have articulated the practice and approach of Place2Be and developed a thriving professional qualifications department. I have designed a complete professional pathway from taster days and basic counselling skills to the Place2Be MA in Counselling Children in Schools. It is these courses and related public facing documents that I am presenting as my Public Works. I am tutor on all of the professional qualification courses and supervise and manage all of the other trainers in the team. I work closely with the Place2Be Training and Operations teams to ensure that our courses are offering students what they need in the field (see Organisational Charts Fig. 1, pg 10). I am fully responsible and accountable for the governance of the programmes, the quality assurance and all accreditation processes. I am also responsible for the research and development of materials. This large remit includes ensuring the curricula are up to date with regard to recent research developments in the field and writing and editing all programmes accordingly. I also write up and report back on findings from all our evaluation processes and act as conduit between senior management and training delivery teams.

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Place2Be offers a specialist on-site team in every school we work in, consisting of a fully qualified school therapist (School Project Manager) and up to six trained volunteer counsellors. Each team offers a range of immediate and accessible interventions to the children (aged 4-14yrs) which include:

- The Place2Talk: a self-referral, lunchtime service, used on average by over 35% of the school population during the year
- One-to-one work for children referred to the service and identified as having a higher level of need
- Group work (small groups of up to 6 children focusing on specific issues and/or needs – e.g. transition, friendship, self-esteem)
- Assistance with sessions in which the whole class participates

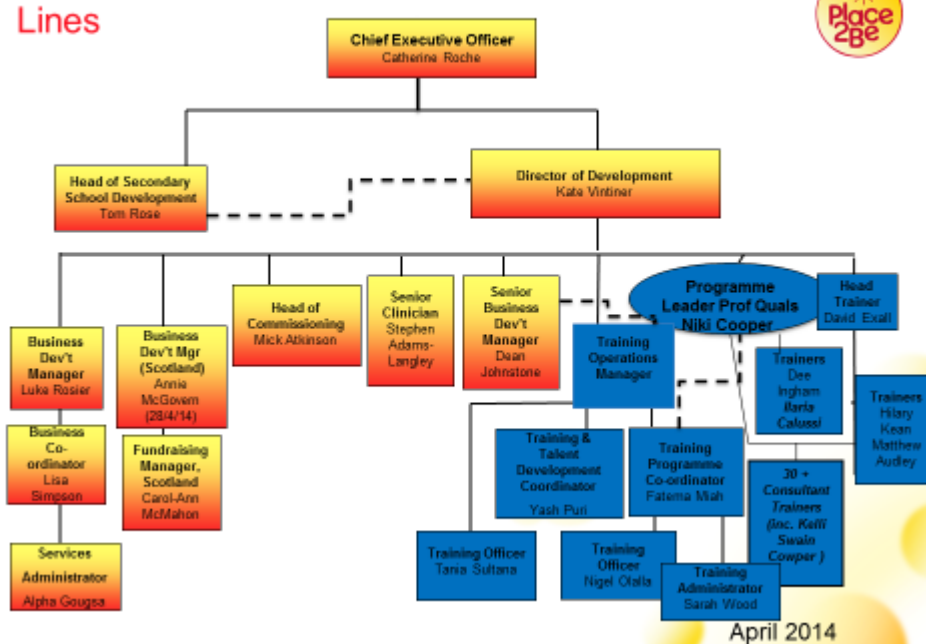
A range of other support services are also offered to parents, school staff and multi-agency partners. This school-based approach enables Place2Be to reach groups which do not usually access therapeutic support services.

**Fig. 1 Organisational charts**

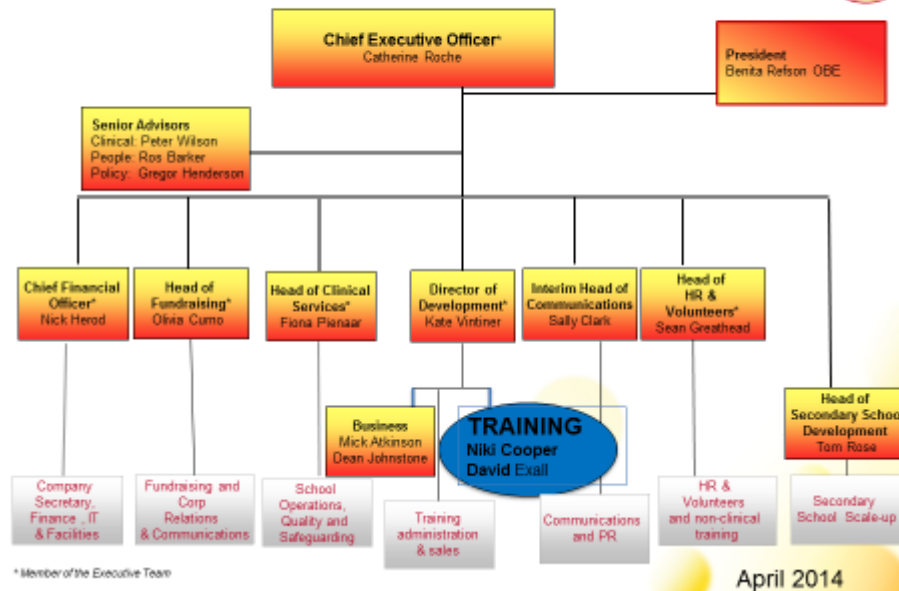
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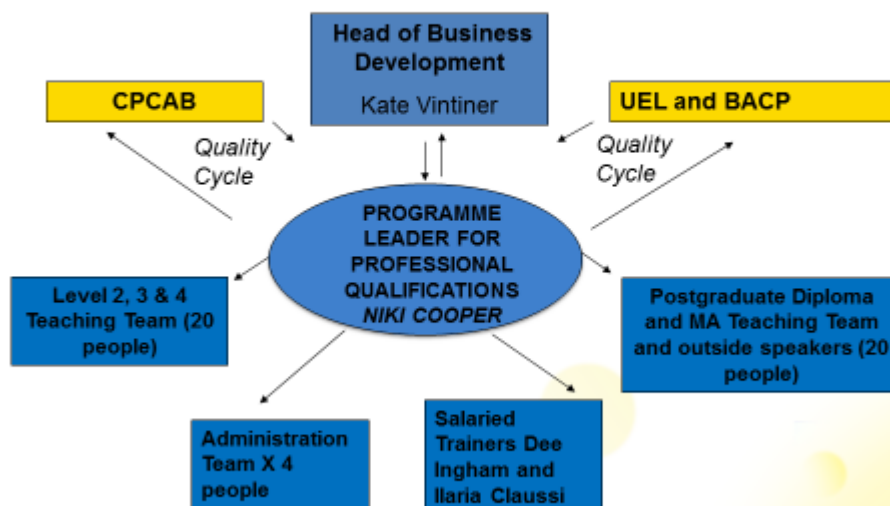
## Development & Training Structure and Reporting Lines



## Executive Structure and Reporting Lines



## Professional Qualifications



### 1.1 Practice to Theory and back again (doing and thinking)

The dynamic between practice and theory, between *doing* and *thinking*, is a key element of the success of the trainings and it is the navigation between these two positions which is at the heart of this doctoral submission and the public works

presented. All of the courses are relevant to practice with children because they are informed by the real life challenges of delivering a service.

As Place2Be grows (we have an additional 75 secondary schools this year) the need for competent business management becomes more and more essential. When Place2Be was founded in 1994 the majority of the senior team were trained counsellors or psychotherapists. Now the executive team has five members and only one of these is a clinician, and these five must evolve, approve and maintain policies (*thinking*) which support the field (*doing*). Meanwhile there are 300 School Project, Cluster and Service Managers and 1,000 Volunteer Counsellors in the field who are doing the *doing*. There is a danger that a gulf could open between the thinkers and the doers, neither of which group has any clear idea what the other really does. This lack of understanding can generate resentment, demonisation and blame across the gulf. My role along with eight others (five of whom are also clinicians) with different areas of responsibility, is to act as conduit between executive and field function to ensure that does not happen. As such the navigation process between *thinking* and *doing* is reflected in the everyday managerial aspects of my role as well as the service delivery and development aspects. This thesis will consider the particular skills that have enabled me to navigate (and even quite enjoy navigating) the sometimes opposing needs of *thinking* and *doing*.

### **1.2 Plain Language**

Jargon and complicated terminology can exclude, divide and alienate people. In schools Place2Be has to communicate clearly and accessibly to a broad range of people. We cannot discuss a child's 'Oedipal conflict' with his teacher or propose 'projective identification' as a possible explanation for a particular teacher's discomfort. In this thesis I will demonstrate a skill I have worked hard to develop, which is to translate complex concepts into clear straightforward language. I have

used this skill to describe the Place2Be approach and to translate that into a stepped, accessible training pathway. I also bring this skill to the writing of all my reports and presentations and to this thesis. Inclusion and access are core ethical values for me and my commitment to communicating in plain language is at the heart of all the Public Works presented.

My Public Works are having an impact on the field of child counselling as a whole and this thesis will also consider how this is manifested in practice.

## **Chapter 2. Personal and Professional Journey**

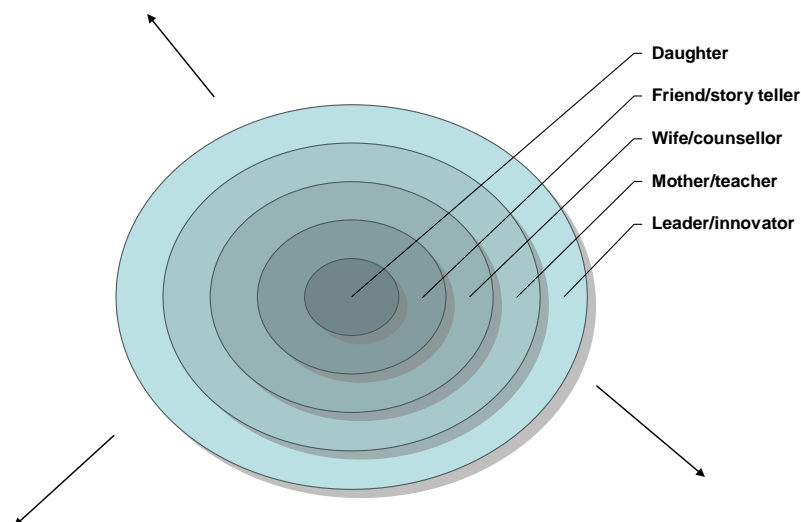
### ***2.1 I'm a story teller***

Events in my early childhood, which was otherwise happy enough, left me anxious and ambivalent about relating with others, especially adults. My mother struggled with depression and I spent a lot of time in hospital when I was very young. These and other more troubling events left me very uncertain about my lovableness. I wanted to be perfect but just couldn't stop being 'horrid'. This played out at school as defiance and rebellion which rendered me unpopular with teachers. I developed a tough exterior which made people wary of me and I did not thrive academically. However, I did have resources: I made people laugh, I was sociable and I was daring and creative. I managed to develop a career in theatre. I like bringing things together as a coherent narrative. This has always been my strategy for making sense of things: beginning, middle, end. Making up stories enables me to think and to theorise. As a writer, director and performer in small scale touring theatre I spent eight years making up and enacting stories. I had a great time and accrued many skills along the way. Nonetheless, my aspirations masked a needy, scared and ashamed interior which I had to work hard to keep in check. The process of writing this doctorate has certainly reawakened those old uncertainties. I have been under scrutiny and this provokes a punitive and shaming internal critic and it has been hard to sustain the energy necessary to break through to the next layer. However, in articulating my own professional journey I have made some sense of what has driven the development of the professional qualifications pathway. Personally I have always been searching for a coherent narrative and it is this quest that has led to a training journey that takes account of every developmental step from beginner counsellor to Masters level practitioner.

## **2.2 Time line versus time circle**

I began this doctoral process by trying to find a way of conceptualising my professional journey as a diagram and was drawn to a circular rather than linear image. I see my development as a series of concentric circles with my beginning at the centre and each additional circle representing a new layer of self that incorporates and is supported by the layers inside.

**Fig. 2 My Journey**



In order for a new circle to form the outer circle needs to crack and break and there is a period of confusion and uncertainty before a new outer circle is confidently established. This process of growth through rupture, repair and elaboration is described and discussed by many authors in slightly different ways (Stern, 2004; Mearns & Cooper, 2005; Bager-Charleson, 2010). Daniel Stern's child development model (Stern, 1985) is layered in a similar way. This circular model of growth and development makes sense to me because it articulates an expansion of perception



and experience that takes account the ongoing existence of the inner layers. I made a circular diagram of my professional and personal journey but in order to include all the relevant details it was almost as tall and wide as me (**Fig. 3**).

**Fig 3. My time circle**



For the purposes of this document I have translated my circular diagram into a time line below (**Fig. 4 Timeline**).

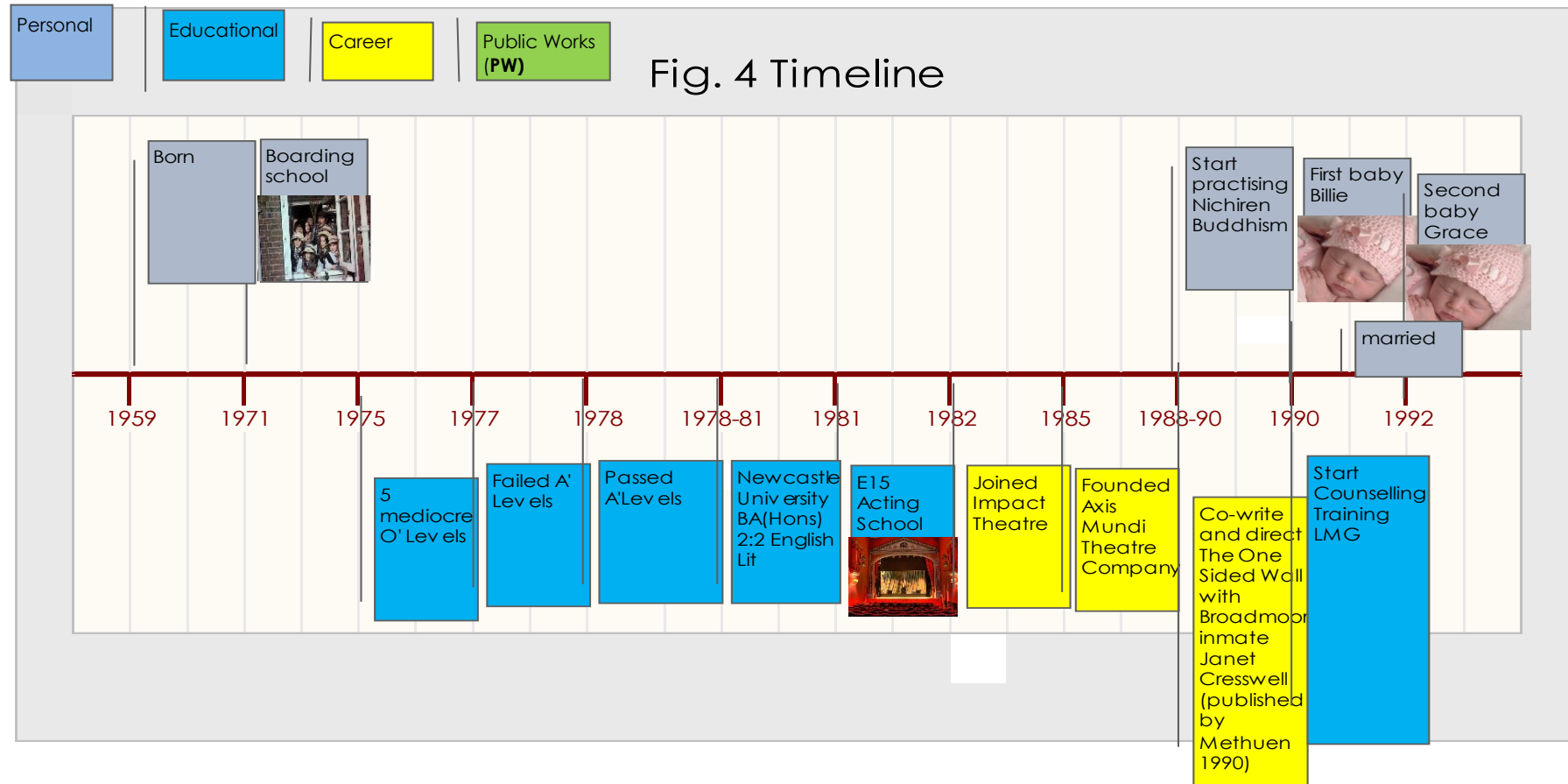


Fig. 4 Timeline cont'd

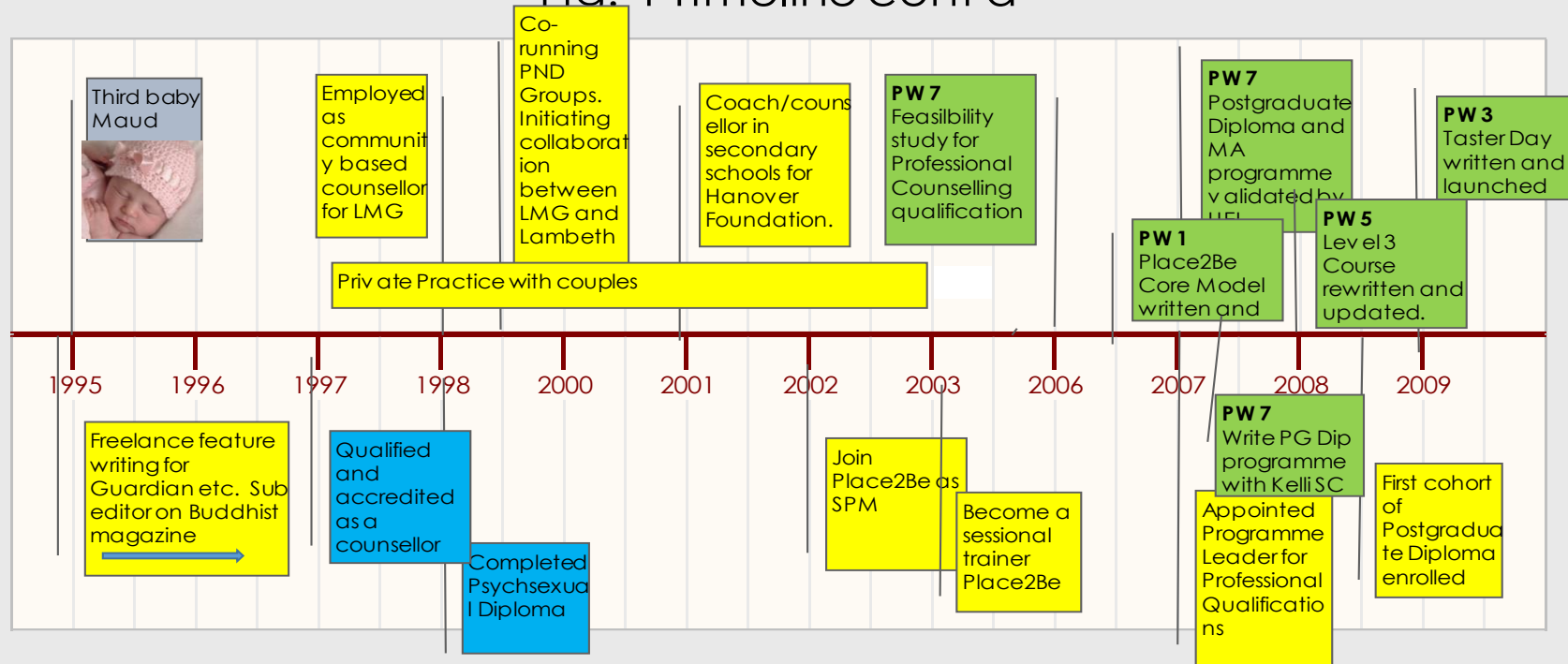
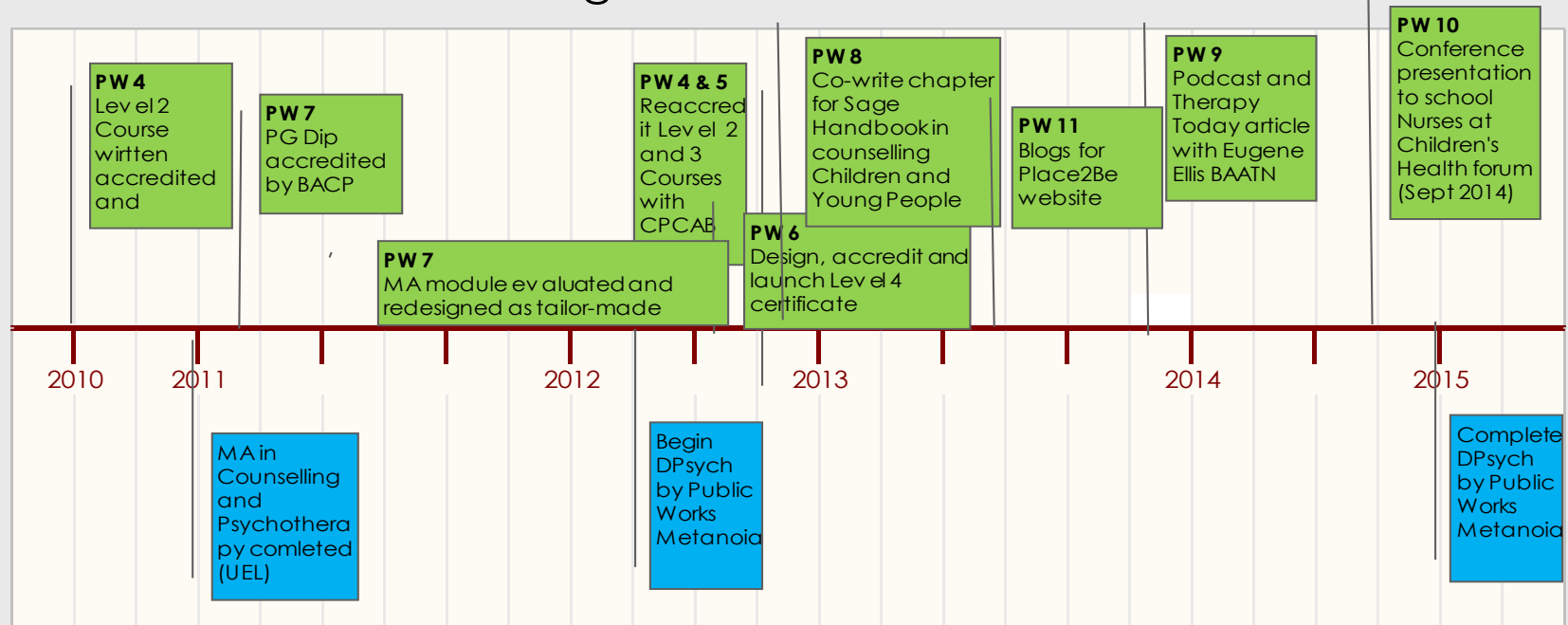


Fig. 4 Timeline cont'd



## ***2.3 Training Journey***

In 1990, when I was pregnant with my first daughter, I had no doubt that I would continue my career in theatre. I had had some moderate success: a published play, invitations to teach and run residencies in Higher Education and even an interview at the Royal Court as a trainee director. However, as soon as my daughter was born everything changed. Whatever hunger drove my need to do theatre was satiated by motherhood and Buddhism. I was lucky to be able to stop and draw breath. What next? Adjusting to my new identity as mother was exciting but difficult. When our daughter was born her father and I were not in a relationship. Once she arrived our relationship improved and we both wanted to be able to become a family but struggled to overcome our anxieties around pretty much everything to do with being a couple. This led us to engage in relationship counselling at London Marriage Guidance (LMG). The outcome felt quite miraculous and in 1991 I decided to train as a couple counsellor at LMG. My partner and I married in 1991 and had two more daughters in 1992 and 1995. Meanwhile I trained, taking two separate years out to be with the girls. I eventually qualified in 1997 having accrued over 350 hours of clinical practice. I also undertook an additional Psychosexual Diploma and was then employed as a community based counsellor with London Marriage Guidance until 2001 and had a small private practice. In 1999 I started working as a Coach for the Hanover Foundation, working with young people in secondary schools. I also helped to run a group for women with Post Natal Depression at London Marriage Guidance and initiated a collaboration with Lambeth Welcare, a network of family centres in the Diocese of Southwark. The combination of these three things excited my interest in working more with children.

## ***2.4 Place2Be – Perfect fit***

I joined Place2Be in 2002 and the core belief that intervening early in children's lives could provide them with a foundation and resilience to manage life's difficulties resonated powerfully with my own beliefs and life experience. I embraced the Place2Be mission with an evangelistic fervour which was heady and energising. My first role was as School Project Manager (SPM) in an Enfield Primary School, setting up the project in the school. It quickly became clear that mine was an enthusiasm that could overwhelm, and my relationship with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and Head deteriorated fast. However, I was enabled by my Place2Be manager and supervisor, Angela Kleeman, to enter into dialogue with the school and a positive outcome was effected without acquiescence or diminishment on my part. This was a new experience for me. I had never allowed myself to be supported like this before and it was an important lesson for later when developing the professional qualifications pathway. Conflicts inevitably arose but I had internalised a new model of better ideas potentially arising out of discord through open dialogue; things that started out 'horrid' could end up being 'very, very good', or at least 'good enough'.

## ***2.5 Epiphany- Biodynamic cabbages***

An important lesson for me at this time was the degree to which, as stated above, jargon and complicated terminology can exclude, divide and alienate people. Shortly after a breakthrough meeting with the Head and SENCO, I was at a Farmer's Market and saw a man with one muddy cabbage. There was a handwritten sign on the front of his table which read 'Biodynamic Cabbages'. The man was explaining to a potential customer what was special about biodynamic vegetables: planting seeds at the right phase of the moon on land that had been cultivated holistically etc. I grimaced with contempt. It sounded like nonsense. I

walked away and bought a cheaper cabbage from a less pretentious sounding stall. However, on the way home I had a moment of intense understanding. I realised the SENCO at the school experienced me in exactly the same way as I had experienced the biodynamic cabbage man. My evangelical enthusiasm had blinded me to the need to communicate clearly or find a shared language. When I returned to school I told the SENCO about the biodynamic cabbage man and suggested that this may be how I appeared to her. She laughed in recognition and from that moment I worked hard to communicate my beliefs and opinions in clear, plain language. When I started sounding like the biodynamic cabbage man she was the first to let me know.

## ***2.6 Training at Place2Be***

Part of Place2Be's mission statement is a commitment to '*enabling*' emotional support to be offered to children in schools. I became a trainer in 2003 and this offered me the opportunity to do this. The lesson of the biodynamic cabbage man was extremely helpful. 'Enabling' others requires plain language. The field of counselling is full of in-house terminology and I became committed to offering training that was in language that everyone could understand.

Brenda Meldrum was then head of training at Place2Be. Her background was in Drama and Play Therapies and part of the success of her trainings was that they were experiential and bypassed the need for words and jargon. In undertaking her trainings myself, I understood the potency of play to articulate and give shape to lived experience. Brenda's influence lives on in Place2Be training even though the content and academic rigour of the courses has changed dramatically. The *doing* is still crucial but the *thinking* about it and articulating the experience is equally important.

## **2.7 Drip**

As a trainer on the original version of the Level 3 course I met many learners who had great potential as child counsellors but were not being offered any progression and there was very little training anywhere else which specialised in working with children. This meant that people who wanted to get a professional qualification had to go elsewhere and complete another (usually adult) training. Place2Be's training story was far from complete. I suggested that we offer a professional counselling qualification. At that time the answer was firmly 'no'. However, I was convinced that this was the next step for Place2Be. I had found my mission and I mentioned the idea at every opportunity I could for the next two years.

## **2.8 Drip, drip**

In 2005 Brenda Meldrum left Place2Be and the training department went through a number of changes. This was an opportunity for me to push harder the idea of a Place2Be professional qualification, and I did. A business head of training was appointed, Nicola Wharmby. I persuaded Nicola that Place2Be needed its own professional training. In 2006 she allowed me to conduct a feasibility study. The first step of this was to meet with Peter Wilson (then Clinical Adviser to Place2Be and founding Director of Young Minds) and Stephen Adams Langley who was (and still is) a senior clinician for Place2Be. They were broadly supportive of the idea but brutally realistic about the amount of work that this would entail and the risks associated with it. I was undaunted. I was convinced that there was a real appetite for this course and the findings from the feasibility study unequivocally confirmed this (See **Vol 3, 2**).



## ***2.9 Drip, Drip, Drip***

Early in 2007 I presented the findings of the feasibility study to the Place2Be Trustees. They were enthusiastic about developing Place2Be training in this way, especially if it meant increased income for the charity. They agreed that a programme leader should be appointed as soon as possible to head up the validation and development of the programme.

## ***2.10 Where's the grown up?***

Throughout this process I had imagined a stronger, wiser grown up would be appointed to run the Diploma. I wanted to be a part of its development but did not see myself as capable of leading it. After the Trustees' meeting Benita Refson (former CEO and now President of Place2Be) and Peter made it clear that they saw me as the person for the job. I was flattered by their faith in me but extremely daunted. I insisted that we advertise the post and I would apply.

## ***2.11 Oh God it's me!***

The post was advertised internally and mine was the only application. I had the job and was overwhelmed by ambivalence. My comfortable outer skin had been ruptured and Peter and Benita were holding up a much larger skin for me to step into. When I handed in my notice as a School Project Manager it felt like stepping off a cliff. However, I booked myself back into therapy and asked my old tutor from LMG, Gillian Walton<sup>2</sup>, to be my mentor. My unique strength at this time was a boundless and congruently driven passion for training people to make a difference to children's lives. I did not allow myself to become paralysed by the enormity of exactly how this was going to happen or what the product would look like. My

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<sup>2</sup> Gillian Walton was the COO and Head of Training at London Marriage Guidance until 2007

enthusiasm brought others along with me. This passion and my ability to make people laugh, to be friendly and sociable and to explain things in plain language all helped sustain the project at this early stage.

### ***2.12 University of East London Validation (2007)***

By this time I had chosen the University of East London (UEL) to validate the programme. The School of Psychology already had its own BACP accredited adult counselling and psychotherapy programme and the School of Social Sciences houses all of the Tavistock Child Psychotherapy programmes, so I knew that the library content would be relevant and plentiful. I decided to set the level of the course as high as possible (Level 7) because, at this time, counselling and psychotherapy were to be regulated under the Health Professionals Council (HPC) and I wanted to be sure that our course would qualify graduates to practise. The validation process was rigorous and provided a useful framework for me as a first-time programme leader (see **Vol 3, 2** for Validation Document). I realised that I was quite good at filling in long complicated forms. Having clear parameters and expectations offers a container for a sometimes overwhelming muddle of thoughts and ideas. It was satisfying for me to be able to use boxes to order them. The Postgraduate Diploma/MA programme was validated in June 2008.

### ***2.13 Postgraduate Diploma Launch***

In September 2008 our first cohort of 18 students enrolled on the course. By this time I had built a robust Professional Qualifications team to support the administration, creation and delivery of the courses. Kelli Swain-Cowper was my closest colleague at the time and she and I wrote the Postgraduate Diploma programme together. We were supported by David Exall and Peter Wilson, who

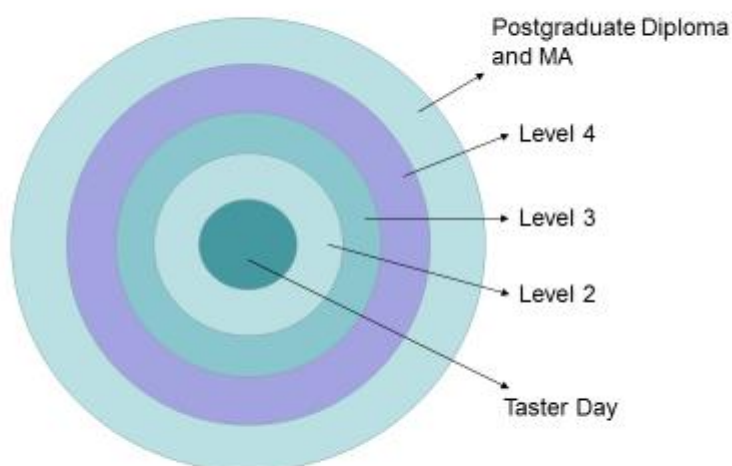
supervised the clinical aspects of the course, and by Grace Savage who was our first administrative co-ordinator. The first year was exciting but fraught and tough lessons were learnt (see below **5.3.4**). The management of the group dynamics proved much harder than we imagined. At the end of that year we made some significant changes to the recruitment process, to the assessment of self-awareness and to the running of the self-development aspects of the course. The rhythm of the programme worked well, however, and the students humbled us with their commitment, hard work and growth.

### ***2.14 Qualifications pathway: the evolution of my role***

The Postgraduate Diploma and MA (**Vol 2, Public Work 7**) were the final stage of the training story, but it became clear to me that the story was starting half-way through and that we were missing the beginning. Over the next four years I wrote and accredited a complete qualification pathway from Taster Day to MA:

- Taster Day (**Volume 2, Public Work 3**) launched September 2009
- Level 2 Access Course (**Volume 2, Public Work 4**) launched May 2010
- BACP Accreditation of Postgraduate Diploma 2011
- Level 2 and 3 course (**Volume 2, Public Work 5**) reaccruited by CPCAB 2012
- Level 4 Counselling Children Certificate (**Volume 2, Public Work 6**) developed as a bolt-on to Level 4 Adult counselling training 2012, accredited by CPCAB and launched in 2013

**Fig.5 Professional Journey**



Throughout the past seven years I have continued to work as a counsellor in a Place2Be school for half a day each week. This has ensured that casework has remained at the heart of all the training and that the training continues to be practice led. I also regularly deliver training for our Field Staff and Volunteer Counsellors as well as writing workshops and conference presentations for the Children and Families section of the Training Department (**e.g. Vol 2, Public Work 10**). This brings me into contact with non-counsellors working in wider systems involving children. As Place2Be is part of a multi-agency intervention for children, it is important for me to be communicating effectively with other professionals.

I have also collaborated with Eugene Ellis of the Black and Asian Therapists' network on a PodCast and article for Therapy Today magazine (**Vol 2, Public Work 9**) and written blogs for the Place2Be website (**Vol 2, Public Work 11**) which challenge me to take counselling and psychotherapeutic ideas to a wider audience. No jargon, no fancy words, no biodynamic cabbages, just plain, accessible but well-crafted language.

## **2.15 Benevolent Authority**

My personal journey with Place2Be has been one of growing up; from compulsive self-reliance with a deep distrust in grown-ups to internalising a benevolent authority which I had never previously experienced and of using that to discover a genuine enthusiasm for seeing other people grow and develop.

I have had two key mentors in Place2Be: Benita Refson (the founder and former CEO, now president of Place2Be) and Peter Wilson (Senior Clinical Advisor to Place2Be, Child Psychotherapist and founder of Young Minds) and they have helped me to change my thinking in significant ways. In 2011 in a supervision session with Peter I said I was experiencing someone as rather 'grandiose and narcissistic'.

'Well' said Peter 'perhaps that's because you're a little grandiose and narcissistic yourself.'

Ten years earlier these words would have demolished me. At this time I heard them as a thoughtful challenge that absolutely hit the nail on the head. I had grown sufficiently to tolerate being seen as less than perfect and could even be enlightened by the observation of my darker impulses.

Peter and Benita's unwavering confidence in me has played an enormous role in emboldening me to persist through all the ups and downs of the past seven years and also this doctoral process. My motivation for embarking on the Professional Doctorate was to take stock of all my learning to date and to conduct a reflective audit of the strengths and weaknesses of my programmes and my other endeavours. I have become immersed in my bubble at Place2Be and have also become busier and busier in the *doing* rather than the *thinking*, so have welcomed the chance to step back and examine all of this work alongside peers from outside

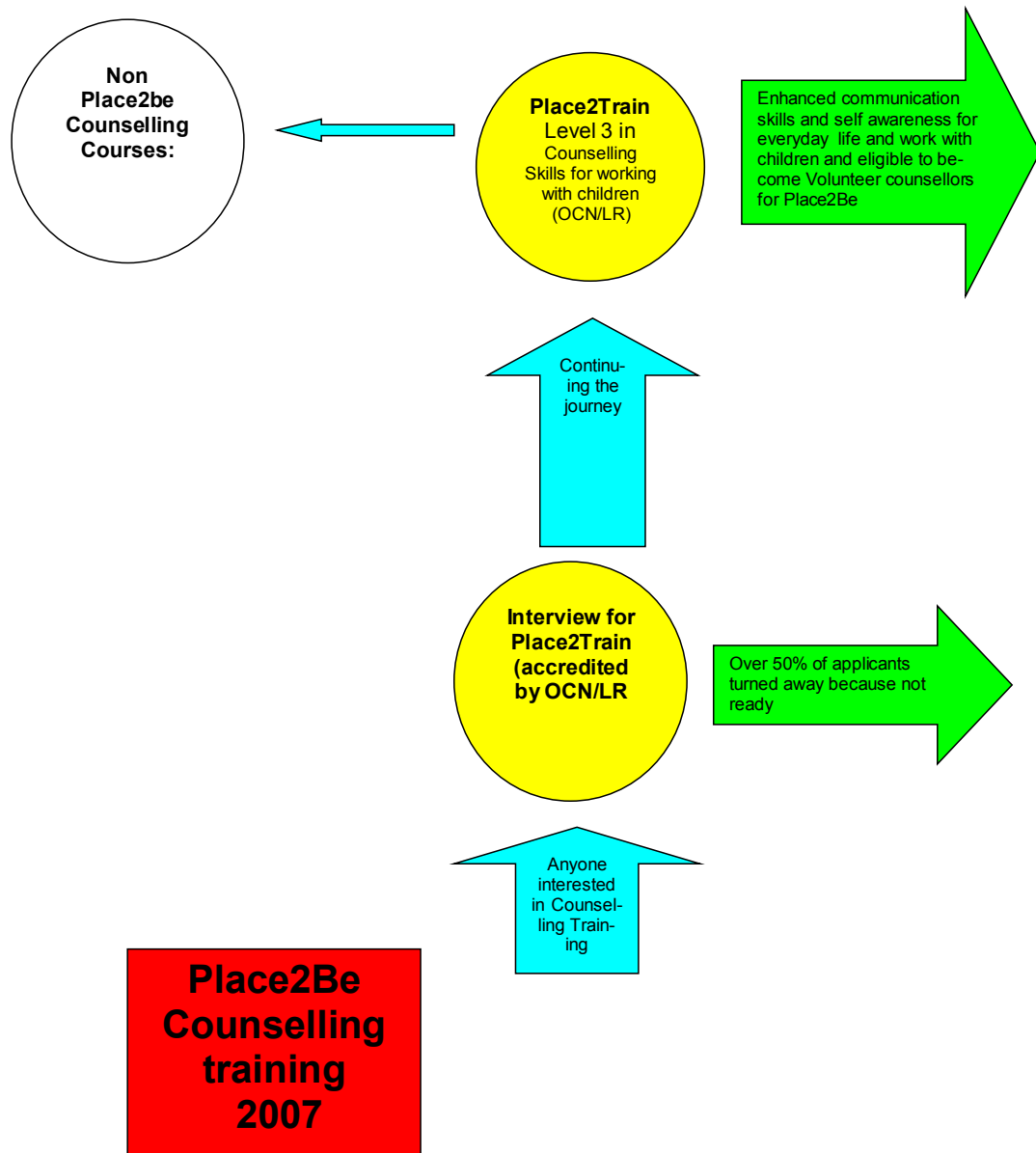
Place2Be. From this exercise in reflective practice (Collins et al, 2010) I hoped to be able to see how best to consolidate and then build on the success of the professional qualifications pathway. I initially enjoyed the challenge of trying to describe and evaluate my experience and achievements in a way that is interesting and digestible to outside eyes. However, this process was a lot more challenging than I had imagined. I thought I was ready for the outer circle of the trainings and my own personal and professional self to be stretched and cracked in order to facilitate continued growth, but this conviction was dynamically challenged by my Registration Panel for this Doctorate. There I was reminded that my core is still fragile. The benevolent authority in my head can still be shouted down. I am still easily shaken and I was not ready for the Panel's challenge to me to stand up and fully declare myself. I was tempted to scurry back to the comfort of the status quo: head down, stay busy, just get on with '*doing*'. But this doctoral process is part of my story; giving up would leave the narrative half complete. Beginning, middle, I had to know what comes next. I have created something that would not have existed if I had not created it. Now I want to know how to build on my achievements from here.

### **Chapter 3. The Public Works (PW)**

The central component of the Public Works I am submitting (to be found in **Volume 2**) is the whole professional qualifications pathway from Taster Day to MA (**Vol 2, PW 3-7**) created by me between 2007 and 2013. This and the other Public Works submitted provide evidence of having met all of the Level 8 doctoral criteria and a full exploration of this is examined in **Chapter 5** of this document. This chapter will describe the content and rationale for each Public Work.

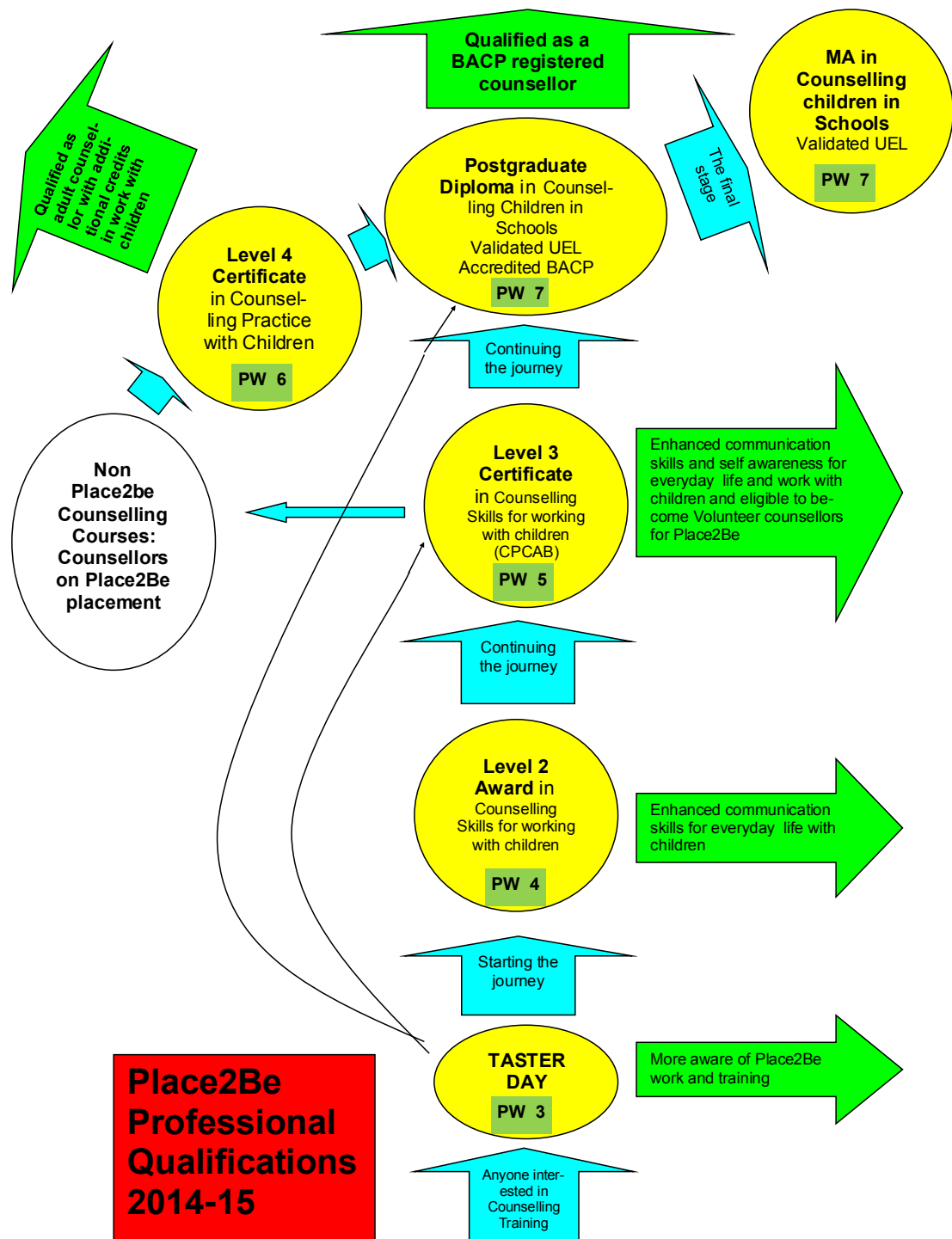
When I joined Place2Be training team in 2007 the Level 3 Certificate (then called Place2Train) was the only counselling training (**fig.6**, below). In 2014-15, following my development of the Public Works outlined here, we are delivering five additional courses (**fig. 7** below). All courses run in London and the Taster Day and the Level 3 Certificate are now also delivered in Medway, Leeds/ Manchester, Cardiff and Glasgow/Edinburgh. The Level 4 Certificate runs in Cardiff, Leeds/Manchester, the North East, Glasgow/ Edinburgh, as well as London. This represents a significant expansion and increased accessibility of the Place2Be training offer, which I am proud to have created.

**Fig. 6 Professional Qualification Department, 2007 (before)**





**Fig.7 Professional Qualifications Department 2014 (Public Works (PW) 3-7)**



### **3.1 Place2Be Core Model and Programme Philosophy and Rationale (Volume 2: PWs 1 and 2)**

My first task, before writing the Postgraduate Diploma course was to articulate the Place2Be's therapeutic approach. It was clear to me that there was an implicit Place2Be 'way' of working which had emerged from over ten years of delivering the service but no-one had attempted to explicitly describe this. The challenge was to take the disparate theoretical positions and language used by clinicians in Place2Be and weave them together as an integrated picture of what actually took place. Practice to theory. I began by simply listing, in plain language, the beliefs and principles that underpinned and drove the work. Then, in December 2007, in consultation with Judy Hunter, David Exall (Senior Trainers) and Peter Wilson, I used this list to put together the first draft of what was to become the Place2Be Core Model, organising these beliefs and principles under the headings of Relationship, Self Awareness, Play and Change. This was presented to the senior practitioners in the organisation and adopted in January 2008. This has subsequently evolved into the Place2Be Therapeutic Approach, written by Peter Wilson (**Vol 3, 1**), The Postgraduate Diploma Philosophy and Rationale (**Volume 2, Public Work 2**) and a chapter co-written with Kelli Swain-Cowper for a SAGE handbook on counselling children and young people published in 2014 (**Volume 2, Public Work 8**).

### **3.2 Taster Day (Volume 2, PW3)**

Until 2009 we had been offering eligible Level 3 candidates a full interview day. We were turning away about 50% of candidates, partly because they did not have a clear idea of exactly what they were applying for until they attended the interview. I therefore decided to write and run a mandatory Taster Day for all candidates so that the applications we received were better informed. The assessment process on the Taster Day is two-way: the participants are assessing the Place2Be on its training

content, rigour and style and the trainers are making a preliminary assessment of what level each participant is at. The first Taster Day ran in September 2009 and is now the entry point for all professional qualifications courses. 562 people attended Taster Days nationwide in 2013-14. 1624 people in total have attended Taster Days since 2009 when they were first launched. See **Volume 2, PW 3** for the Taster Day programme and content.

### ***3.3 Level 2 Award in Counselling Skills for working with Children***

#### ***(Volume 2, PW4)***

Successful completion of the Level 3 Course qualifies participants to go on to a supervised training placement in a Place2Be school for up to a year. As such, the standard of skills and self-awareness has to be very high. Up until 2008, we were turning away many potentially good trainees. I decided that we should develop a Level 2 Access Course. I wrote this seven day programme with specific programme input from training colleague and experienced Place2Be trainer Yvonne Fernandez. She was a useful sounding board in devising appropriately pitched experiential exercises because of her extensive knowledge of existing Place2Be trainings. I gained OCNLR (Open College Network London Region) accreditation for this course in 2009. This course is now accredited by CPCAB (the Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body). The first iteration of the Level 2 Award ran in May 2010. 48 people completed this course in 2013-14 and 112 people have completed the course since it launched in 2010. See **Volume 2, PW4** for the Learner Handbook for this course and a sample programme. See also **Volume 3, 8** for the CPCAB external verifier's reports.

### **3.4 Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Skills for working with Children (Volume 3, PW5)**

The original Level 3 Certificate (then called Place2Train) had been running since 1997 and had been used as a way of training up members of the communities in which we worked to be Volunteer Counsellors in our schools. Place2Be operates in 20 clusters across the UK and there is a nationwide shortage of specialised training in counselling children. Since 2009 we have been delivering the 14 day Level 3 Course in some of our clusters outside of London as follows:

2009 Burnley

2010 Durham

2011-12 Leeds, Medway and Cardiff

2013-14 Leeds, Cardiff and Glasgow

2014-15 Manchester, Edinburgh, Medway, Cardiff

112 people completed the Level 3 nationwide in 2013-14 and 377 people have completed it since 2008.

Much of the original Place2Train programme, written by Brenda Meldrum, remains. Her particular strength was devising experiential exercises which enable learners to link their own internal worlds to the work with children and to the theory. Many of these exercises remain and the rhythm and structure of each training day has stayed almost the same. What I have done is:

- Updated the theoretical content including lectures and readings (see sole authored Sample Programme in **Vol 2, PW5**)
- Taken the course through a reaccreditation process with CPCAB
- Made the assessment criteria more specific and rigorous (see Assessment Log in Learner Handbook in **Vol 2, PW5**)
- Written a new Learner Handbook and a Tutor assessment guidelines document (see Learner Handbook in **Vol 2, PW5**)

- Standardised the weekly programmes and lectures into PowerPoint slides (see sample programme in **Vol 2, PW 5**)
- Added tutorial and skills days
- Devised clear and specific assessment criteria for counselling skills at Level 2 and 3 (see Counselling Skills criteria sheet in Learner Handbook, **Vol 2, PW 5**)

Learner evaluations are overwhelmingly positive about this course (see **Vol 3, 5** for evaluations of a course trained by me) and CPCAB is consistently impressed by the high level of self-awareness demonstrated by the Learners. I conducted a small research project to assess the Level 3 graduates' impact in the field (**Vol 3, 11**), which was extremely positive but also helpfully highlighted areas which could be evolved more in the course. This fed into my Action Plan for this year (see **Vol 3, 10**).

### ***3.5. Level 4 Certificate in Counselling Children (Practice) (Volume 2, PW6)***

CPCAB do not have any other child counselling courses so a major initiative of national importance has been the development of the Level 4 Practice Certificate in Counselling Children. Place2Be Volunteer Counsellors are offered eight days of training in their first placement year and a further four if they stay for a second. However, whilst participants get certificates of attendance for these workshops, they could not previously gain any additional qualification. In the process of reaccrediting the Level 2 and 3 courses with CPCAB I realised we should package the eight days of first year Volunteer Counsellor trainings as a supplementary Level 4 Certificate for people on Level 4 CPCAB adult trainings. On successful completion of all eight days of training and some written work, learners have additional child counselling credits to add to their adult qualification. This Level 4 Certificate was piloted in

London in 2013 and has now been rolled out nationwide. A total of 66 students have now successfully completed this course. This year 2014-15, we are aiming to offer this Level 4 Course to 100 people nationwide. Colleges offering adult counselling courses which provide Place2Be with Volunteer Counsellors have responded positively to the Level 4 Certificate because, in essence, it extends their training offer. People who want to work with children are sometimes put off applying for adult courses because there is no specialist thread. Now these colleges can recommend the Level 4 Certificate as a specialist addition to their courses.

The Level 4 workshop programmes were originally written by Brenda Meldrum and, as with the Level 3 Course, many of the experiential exercises and key messages remain intact. All of the programmes have been updated over the years, not just by me but by other colleagues. What I have done is:

- Updated the theoretical content including lectures and readings (see sample programme **Vol 2, PW 6**)
- Taken the course through an accreditation process with CPCAB
- Devised assessment criteria that are specific and rigorous ( see Assessment Log in Learner Handbook, **Vol 2, PW 6**)
- Written a new Learner Handbook and a Tutor assessment guidelines document (**Vol 2, PW 6**)
- Standardised the workshop programmes and lectures into PowerPoint slides (see **Vol 2, PW 6** for sample programme)
- Devised a link tutor system to ensure students are fully supported on their journey (see Welcome Paper in Learner Handbook, **Vol 2, PW 6**)

In the first year of delivery (2013-14) there were inevitable challenges and lots of learning. However, learner feedback at the end was overwhelmingly positive. In research that I undertook to assess the impact of the Level 4 course, I found that

the most prevalent theme was the learners' belief that their experience of the placements had been deepened by having undertaken the course. The perception was that having to write journals and complete reading assignment sheets after each workshop meant that the learning became embedded and more applied to their work. As part of the same research endeavour (**Vol 3, 11**), it was clear that Supervisors' (SPM's) perception is that Volunteer Counsellors who have enrolled on the Level 4 are much more engaged and dynamic on the placements than those who have not. This thorough review of tutor, supervisor and learner feedback has led to substantive changes being made for this 2014-15 intake. See **Vol 3, 10** for an Action plan outlining planned changes to all assessed courses this year on the basis of consultation with learners, staff, supervisors and external examiners.

### ***3.6 Postgraduate Diploma (Volume 2, PW7)***

The Postgraduate Diploma course was created from scratch by Kelli Swain-Cowper and me. As I approached the writing of it I imagined a 450 hour theatre show. It had to take students on a continuous journey from the Level 3 and maintain their interest and enthusiasm whilst enabling them to survive the hard parts. In early 2008 Kelli Swain-Cowper and I wrote the programme session by session with meticulous attention to detail ( see **Vol 2 PW 7.2** for sample programme). We worked from a skeleton structure that I had devised for the University of East London validation process, which is still a document we return to as a course overview (**Vol 2 PW 7.4**). The writing process for this was completely collaborative. Each lecture, whilst initially drafted by one of us, has come to fruition and evolved through discussion.

My sole contribution to this course was/is to:

- Write the initial Validation application (**Vol 3, 2**)
- Take the course through accreditation with BACP (**Vol 3, 3**)

- Appoint, liaise with and manage the teaching staff and workshop facilitators
- Write and annually update the Student Handbook (including the Programme Philosophy and Rationale, **Vol 2, PW 7.1**, Student Handbook)
- Work with administration, finance and management to make the course financially viable
- Devise and manage quality assurance systems for the course (e.g. Annual REP [Review and Enhancement Process] documentation **Vol 3, 6**)
- Implement agreed changes to the programme including liaising with UEL Quality Committee on Module Specification changes
- Write annual reports based on data gathered from students, staff, placement supervisors and external examiner (see **Vol 3, 6** for the REP [Review and Enhancement Process] report)
- Manage the revalidation process every 5 years (see Collaborative Review CAC [Critical Appraisal Commentary] document **Vol 3, 7**)

Student evaluations for this programme are also extremely positive. The most prevalent theme that emerges from student feedback is one of being stretched and challenged by the course in such a way that promotes growth and learning. (See **Vol 3, 6** for Student Evaluation reports and response in the REP [Review and Enhancement Process] document). 80 people have now successfully graduated from the Postgraduate Diploma. In 2014-15, due to increased demand, we have increased our capacity to two cohorts per year with up to 18 students in each.

### **3.7 MA (Vol 2, PW7)**

The third year of the programme, the Dissertation module, presented particular challenges. I decided to adopt the existing UEL module for our students. UEL had the teaching and supervision expertise that we did not, at the time, have. Students



who wished to undertake the third year module would join UEL third year Counselling and Psychotherapy students for the taught and supervisory aspects of the programme, whilst being supported in their research projects by me, the Place2Be Research and Evaluation team and by their placement supervisors. At the end of the Module they gain an MA in Counselling Children in Schools. There have been many frustrations and disappointments for the six students who have so far undertaken this module and we have worked hard to overcome these. This year we have two students undertaking the module at UEL and coming to Place2Be for personal and practical support seminars with me. The additional support from these seminars is regarded as crucial to all the students who have undertaken the module so far and I have enjoyed working with the students on preparing them to undertake interviews for their research and helping them to analyse their data.

I am including this module as a part of my Public Works because I have worked closely with UEL to get this module right (**Vol 3, 4.2**). Improvements have been made to the taught elements of the programme and the arrangements for ethical approval and supervision are much better. Nonetheless, our arrangement with UEL is something of an anomaly and this has proved very hard to manage. In 2015 I am submitting the module for revalidation so that we deliver it at Place2Be. We now have the expertise in-house and I am confident that we can offer a more tailored and relevant programme. I have already devised APL (Accredited Prior Learning) criteria and processes for people to join the course at this stage (**Vol 3, 4.3**) and my hope is that by delivering the module ourselves we will have larger numbers of people conducting useful and relevant research for the field of child therapy.

### ***3.8 Plus (Vol 2, PWs 8-11 )***

There are other activities which are connected to the professional pathway which I am including here as part of my Public Works because they provide evidence of

how creating this professional qualifications journey has led to other ventures which also demonstrate Level 8 thinking and practice.

### **3.8.1 'Becoming an Integrative Practitioner' (Vol 2, PW8)**

In 2012 I was invited to write a chapter for a then newly-commissioned SAGE Handbook for Counselling Children and Young People. I wrote a first draft and then brought Kelli Swain-Cowper in as a co-author. This was a great opportunity for us to articulate the integrative model which has continued to evolve during the life of the course (**Vol 2, PW 8**). This was our first writing venture together and our next step will be to 'write the book'.

### **3.8.2 'Silenced: the Black Student Experience' podcast and article in Therapy Today (Vol 2, PW9)**

In 2012 I approached Eugene Ellis from the Black and Asian Therapist's Network (BAATN) having read an article he wrote in the BACP magazine *Therapy Today*. I was interested in consulting him on best practice in counselling and psychotherapy training with relation to racial and ethnic difference, having encountered my own lack of understanding during the first three years of the programme (see **Chapter 5.1.3** below). We had regular correspondence and I attended a workshop at BAATN delivered by Isha McKenzie-Mavinga based on her book *Black Issues in the Therapeutic Process* (2009). Sometime after this, Eugene asked me if he could interview me about my experience of attending the workshop for a BAATN Podcast and how it had informed my approach to counselling training. I happily agreed. This had a good response and Eugene suggested we make it into an article for *Therapy Today*. Together we wrote the article which was published in *Therapy Today* in December 2013. The response was lively and challenging. Issues of skin colour and oppression evoke strong reactions from people of all colours and it is clear there is still a difficult and long conversation to be had. Eugene has initiated a Trainer's Forum for counselling tutors to get together and discuss the issues and

best practice. I am a core member of the Forum and we are now hosting the regular meetings at Place2Be.

### **3.8.3 Conference presentation for Child City Health Forum (Vol 2, PW10)**

The Place2Be training department also delivers courses and workshops to schools and community groups. Part of my role is to deliver these trainings and to work with David Exall (Head Trainer) to keep the programmes current and accessible. In May 2015 Place2Be is mounting a Conference for Counsellors. Dave Exall and I are leading on the content for this. I have delivered training to a number of professional and community organisations who work with children including: Teach First, City Year, Virtual Heads and Mosaic Housing Association. Many of the schools and community programmes are now delivered internationally as well, and the challenge is to ensure that counselling theory is delivered in a practical and digestible way. This is an ideal arena in which to check out the 'bio-dynamic cabbage' factor of my course material. It is also a means by which the Place2Be theoretical approach can be disseminated to a wider, non-clinical audience and put into practice in teaching, youth work, fostering and other community settings.

I was recently asked to deliver a presentation to Health Visitors and School Nurses at a conference organised by the Child City Health Forum. I am including the presentation as a part of my Public Works because it is a good example of how materials written by me for the professional qualifications courses can be applied to other fields (see **Vol 2, PW 10** for the PowerPoint and programme for this).

Feedback on this presentation was very positive and we have been invited to deliver more presentations to the nationwide network of Child City Health Forum conferences.

### 3.8.4 Place2Be Blogs (Vol 2, PW11)

The Place2Be website has a page dedicated to Blogs from supporters and employees of Place2Be. I have written two in the past 18 months and am including these as further evidence of my commitment to plain language.

<http://www.place2be.org.uk/our-story/blog/why-we-train-good-enough-counsellors/>

<http://www.place2be.org.uk/our-story/blog/why-is-the-counselling-profession-so-white-and-middle-class/>

Another reason I am including these is because they succinctly articulate key aspects my own personal and professional journey. I have learnt personally that being 'good-enough' is better than perfect and that there is still an urgent need to examine the exclusivity of my profession. I like the challenge of having to write clearly, accessibly and from the heart and these two pieces demonstrate that.

### 3.9 Sole and Collaborative Contribution

The process of evolving the professional pathway has been collaborative at every stage. In an effort to articulate the balance between personal contribution and collaboration I put together a table (**Fig. 8**). The words 'proposed', 'wrote', 'steered', 'developed' and 'evaluated' are the most significant in this. My role has been to drive the process and hold on to the big picture, ensuring that there is consistency, coherence and accessibility throughout and that the quality of the training is high.

**Fig.8 Contribution Table**

Vol 2, Number:	Public Works	Aspects already in place or undertaken by others	Sole contribution	Contribution in collaboration with others
1	Place2Be Core Model		Wrote and disseminated all drafts	Consulted with colleagues and wider organisation to refine final

				product
<b>2</b>	<b>Programme Philosophy and rationale</b>		Wrote original and annually update as necessary	
<b>3</b>	<b>Taster Day</b>		<p>Proposed idea</p> <p>Wrote programme</p> <p>Developed resources</p> <p>Evaluated programme</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation and update of programme</p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Level 2 Award in Counselling Skills for working with Children: Awarded by CPCAB</b>	Some tried and tested exercises from Level 2 School based staff training	<p>Developed Learning Outcomes and structure of programme</p> <p>Validated with OCN/LR and then CPCAB</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation of programme</p> <p>Supervision of trainers delivering the programme</p>	<p>Wrote programme and developed resources with colleague Yvonne Fernandez</p> <p>Working with Training Team to market the programme</p> <p>Working with Head of Business Development to ensure financial viability of the programme</p>
<b>5</b>	<b>Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Skills for working with Children: Awarded by CPCAB</b>	The original Place2Train programme, developed by Brenda Meldrum	Rewrote, updated and developed new material for programmes (e.g. Difference and Diversity) as necessary	<p>Working with experienced trainers to ensure materials up to date.</p> <p>Working with Training Team to market the</p>

			<p>Revalidated with OCN/LR and then CPCAB</p> <p>Developed new, clearer assessment processes</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation of programme</p> <p>Supervision and training of trainers delivering programme</p>	<p>programme</p> <p>Working with Head of Business Development to ensure financial viability of the programme</p>
6	<b>Level 4 Certificate in Counselling Children: Awarded by CPCAB</b>	All Volunteer Counsellor workshops, originally written by Brenda Meldrum	<p>Accredited existing programmes through CPCAB</p> <p>Articulated Learning outcomes and assessment criteria</p> <p>Made links with CPCAB Adult Level 4 courses at other training institutions</p> <p>Developed presentations and updated reading for all workshops</p> <p>Run standardisation workshops annually for all trainers.</p>	<p>Working with training team to market the programme</p> <p>Working with Head of Business Development to ensure financial viability of the programme. Keeping programmes up to date with co-members of Training Quality and Policy Committee</p>
7	<b>Postgraduate Diploma: Validated by UEL and Accredited</b>		Proposed Place2Be professional qualification in	Co-wrote programme content with Kelli Swain-

	by BACP		<p>2003.</p> <p>Conducted feasibility study</p> <p>Steered programme through Validation process at UEL including writing all validation documents</p> <p>Wrote structure and skeleton content of programme</p> <p>Steered programme through BACP accreditation and wrote all documents to support (including programme rationale and philosophy)</p> <p>Liaising with link staff at UEL when problems arise.</p> <p>Making links with eminent experts in the field to come and deliver workshops on the programme</p> <p>Quality assurance: Analysing student and external examiner data and reporting back to Place2Be and</p>	<p>Cowper. She wrote some sessions and I wrote others and then we worked on them all together.</p> <p>Worked with HR at Place2Be and UEL to evolve appropriate policies and procedures for the programme</p> <p>Working with training team to market the programme</p> <p>Working with Head of Business Development to ensure financial viability of the programme</p> <p>Working with supervisor, Peter Wilson, Kelli and co-tutor Dee Ingham to make changes to programme</p>
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			students	
<b>7</b>	<b>MA</b>	Existing UEL Module delivered by UEL staff	<p>Persisting in pursuit of better product in the face of student dissatisfaction</p> <p>Evolution of APL processes so that Place2Be staff can apply to join the programme for the 3<sup>rd</sup> module.</p> <p>Proposed new approach. Revalidating Module to be delivered by Place2Be (ongoing).</p>	<p>Working with UEL staff to improve quality of delivery for our students</p> <p>Evolving and especially tailored programme for our students to be delivered by UEL staff at Place2Be</p> <p>Offering additional seminars for our students with Place2Be research and evaluation team</p>
<b>8</b>	<b>Chapter for Sage Handbook (2014)</b>	Maggie Robson one of the editors approached me to write the chapter	Wrote first draft of chapter	Brought Kelli SC as co-author and we worked together on final drafts
<b>9</b>	<b>Pod Cast and Therapy Today Article with Eugene Ellis</b>	<p>Eugene organised and edited initial podcast</p> <p>He also transcribed the interview as a starting point for the article</p>	<p>Approached Eugene having read about him</p> <p>Attended at BAATN workshop and agreed to be interviewed for the Podcast</p> <p>Wrote responses to Eugene's questions and formulated questions for him</p>	Collaborated on final products
<b>10</b>	<b>Place2Be Blogs</b>		Both topics close to my heart and	



			written entirely by me	
<b>11</b>	<b>Conference Presentation to School Nurses and Health Visitors (Child Health Forum)</b>		<p>Researched needs of the attendees. Consulted a School Nurse</p> <p>Wrote presentation from scratch</p> <p>Delivered</p>	

## **Chapter 4. Impact of Public Works: from practice to theory and back again**

In order to consider the relevance and impact of my Public Works I gathered testimonials from 24 people (students and peers) in the field and also reviewed all of my evaluation and auditing data. What emerged was clear evidence that the Professional Qualifications pathway is having a significant impact on individuals, on the organisation and on the wider field.

### ***4.1 Impact on individuals***

#### **4.1.1 Children**

Developing the trainings has had a positive impact on my practice and I believe I am a better counsellor than I was seven years ago. In my work with children whose behaviours have greatly challenged the school, I believe my capacity to keep thinking inside the chaotic or deadened presentation of some children has increased. Elaine Eisenthal, who supervised me between 2007 and 2013, values the depth of examination of my cases and my use of current theory to structure my thoughts (**Testimonial Vol 1, Appendix K**). This underlines for me the value to my practice of constructing the training pathway. The training pathway, in turn, benefits from my practice because I learn so much from my clients and can bring that into the training.

The impact of my Public Works on individual children is evident from the findings of a survey I conducted of School Project Manager (SPM) views of the efficacy of the professional qualifications training in 2014 (**Vol 3, 11**). The perception of the SPMs is that the level of skills, knowledge and self-awareness in the field has been greatly enhanced by the courses and that the children are benefitting.

#### **4.1.2 Students (Testimonials, Vol 1, Appendices A-H)**

Samira, Sarah, Basi and Wendy (**Appendices A, B, C & D**), all members of the first cohort, perceive in me an openness and willingness to learn. They witnessed our early mistakes and our attempts at reparation of those. In the first two years I became accustomed to an almost permanent, gnawing, fizzing anxiety which I identified as thwarted perfectionism and shame. Once again it was supervision and my own therapy that enabled me to process this into transparency with the group. The positive impact of this transparency was enabling the students to accept their own failings and to embrace being 'good enough' rather than either 'very, very good' or 'horrid' (see **Vol 2, PW 11**). Students of counselling, and especially of counselling children, appear to be unusually harsh critics of themselves (Barnett, 2007). Kelli and I modelled getting things wrong, thinking about it and then developing new and better understanding from that: rupture, repair, elaborate (Stern, 1985).

Basi and Samira's testimonials (**Vol 1, Appendices A&B**) highlight the positive impact on them of my openness to explore issues of difference. I can still feel helpless and overwhelmed when faced with a full and frank discussion about difference of any kind. What I have learnt is that tolerating my anxiety and continuing to think are key elements of containing individuals and groups in their explorations. As Duncan Cartwright suggests, containment is an energetically active and sometimes painful process (Cartwright, 2010), outwardly calm but internally tumultuous. This process had a positive impact on Samira, Basi and Erika but a much greater impact on me personally as well as on all our training. Abigail Baah, a former postgraduate student (**Vol 1, Appendix G**) indicates that my

progress has had a direct impact on her confidence as a minority member of the group:

*'Niki's encouragement and drive to see culture not only thought about but implemented in practice has enabled me to feel confident enough to explore the many facets of culture when it comes to my practice. ... This sense of openness and exploration will be the foundation from which I will be able to practise as a counsellor in Ghana as well as other parts of the world.'*

Abigail has recently made a film with a British based Ghanaian organisation (My Ghana Roots) about mental health and stigma in African communities. I was interviewed as part of this. We are also discussing the possibility of delivering the Level 2 and 3 courses in Ghana where she is making links with local mental health organisations.

Anne, Basi, Sue and Wendy (**Appendices F, A, H & D**) all mention that they were positively influenced by my belief in their potential . My own experience of being inspired to find my way in higher education and also my mentors', Peter Wilson and Benita Refson's, belief in me have given me the conviction that everyone can succeed academically given the right support and a lively learning environment. Many of our students are very academically under-confident when they begin but, in Sue's words 'following the course my life, my confidence and self-esteem were improved greatly'. Students appear to have felt empowered by their experience of me.

The impact on students of having completed the Place2Be training pathway is that they are highly employable. An employment audit that I conducted in 2013 suggested that 80% of graduates are in paid employment as counsellors within 6 months of graduating. Basi, Keren, Sue, Sarah, Ann and Wendy (**Vol 1,**

**Appendices A, E, C, F& D)** have all gained paid employment as counsellors, mostly in school settings. They all highlight the relevance of the programme to their work and identify specific ways in which their learning is applied in practice, highlighting the practice-led strengths of the programme.

Relationships with individuals offer me fuel and fodder for learning and further development. I remain committed to ensuring that I continue to deliver training and clinical work so that the trainings can evolve in a dynamic, experience-led way.

## ***4.2 Impact on the organisation***

As an employer, Place2Be is now developing a workforce for the future with the right skills to deliver the service. As a former School Project Manager and current counsellor for Place2Be, I am passionately committed to the service. The function of the training pathway is primarily to create a structure which supports and energises the service rather than imposes anything on it. From practice (*doing*) to theory (*thinking*) and back again.

### **4.2.1 Business**

When I joined Place2Be training in 2007 (**fig 6, 1.3**) the Level 3 Certificate was our only professional qualifications course. Our income from this in the financial year 2006-7 was approximately £19,000. Our professional qualifications training income in 2013-14 was over £496,000. All courses run in London and the Taster Day and the Level 3 Certificate are now also delivered in centres nationwide. Place2Be has provided a solid business framework in which to roll out the new ventures. As Catherine Roche, our now Chief Executive Officer says in her Testimonial (**Vol 1, Appendix L**), I have worked with Kate Vintiner our Director of Business

Development to ensure that the financial viability of the training is balanced with the needs of the students. The goal is to ensure that the professional qualifications wing of the organisation breaks even at least and we are on target to do that this year.

Most of our London courses are full and some have waiting lists. Our Level 3 Certificate courses nationwide are recruiting steadily and I have now established progression routes for our graduates to other local courses. Counsellors who come on placement with Place2Be are now able to undertake the Level 4 Certificate and go into the professional arena with a specialist supplementary qualification to their core adult training. The impact of this will be to significantly extend our training reach and maintain a steady supply of especially trained child counsellors across the country (see **Chapter 3** for numbers of participants on each course).

None of this would have happened without the Postgraduate Diploma which raised the profile of Place2Be in the field of counselling training. Up to then we had been seen as an organisation which offered great placements with some Continued Professional Development (CPD). Now we are seen as a professional qualification training provider and this gives credibility to all our other courses as well. Benita Refson, founder and former Chief Executive of Place2Be, in her testimonial (**Vol 1, Appendix M**) describes this as 'transformational' for the organisation. She says that the development of the professional qualifications pathway has significantly developed the 'professional understanding and expertise of the workforce'.

Catherine Roche, in her testimonial (**Vol 1, Appendix 12**) highlights the pathway as supportive of Place2Be's mission of enabling emotional support to be provided to children in schools and describes this as a 'primary means of sharing our learning and supporting many thousands more children indirectly through the professionals that we train'.

It is gratifying to me that what Benita calls my 'vision' and my 'dogged determination' to realise it are regarded as supportive of the vision of the organisation as a whole rather than a side-line or worse, an irritant. Benita and Catherine describe me as passionate, diligent, professional, courageous, resilient, endlessly enquiring and highly organised with an 'attention to detail'. In this context these qualities have been put to good use and have had a positive impact. It has taken my lifetime so far to find the right place to develop new skills and direct my energy in a useful way.

#### **4.2.2 Theory (*Thinking*)**

The development of the Postgraduate Diploma has led to our articulation of the Place2Be integrative approach (**Vol 3, 1**). As a growing organisation with an expanding workforce, there is now a consistency of approach across the organisation. Whereas in 2006 Place2Be described itself as broadly child-centred and non-directive, it is now acknowledged that other approaches are used in the work and these have been integrated into the training and the model. As the leader of all the professional qualifications courses, I have been able to ensure that there is a coherent message running through all the programmes and that it is theoretically robust.

Peter Wilson, my Mentor and Clinical Adviser to Place2Be, in his testimonial (**Vol 1, Appendix N**) notes the previous lack of professional counselling training specifically orientated towards work with children in school. He highlights the development of an integrative, practice-led training model as a unique contribution to the organisation as well as the national landscape of child counselling. Whilst the

articulation of the model has been a collaborative process, he suggests that my leadership and particular passion for the key elements of **self awareness, play and relationship** offered a structure for the development of the courses and the model. Throughout the development process I did indeed find comfort in the certainty of this tripod of key elements

Kelli Swain-Cowper is the person with whom I have collaborated most closely in the development of the professional qualifications pathway and it is this relationship which has been responsible for the generation of new conceptualisations of the work we do. Although Kelli's focus is on the Postgraduate Diploma, the ripples of our relationship can be felt within all the other programmes. We have spoken with each other at length about how our collaboration could be described. It is impossible for us to tease out who contributed what to the Postgraduate Diploma programme. It is easier to describe the complementary qualities that we both bring. In her testimonial (**Vol 1, Appendix O**) she highlights the impact that the professional pathway has had in introducing new knowledge and ideas and challenging the organisation to incorporate these. Kelli regards me as someone who pushes the boundaries of learning into more progressive areas. I would say that she tempers my wild enthusiasm and helps me to shape it into something coherent and useful. I think we have found a way of making creative use of where our approaches clash and the inevitable discomfort that we excite in each other. I share her view that the willingness to guide as well as be guided has been an important component of successful collaboration. Her status as Year 1 Tutor and co-author of the postgraduate diploma programme does not fully describe her contribution to the professional qualifications pathway as a whole and, in the ripples, the *thinking* of the organisation.



#### 4.2.3 Practice (*Doing*)

The emphasis on relationship and self-awareness has, it appears, yielded positive results in the field. Both of the Cluster Managers who gave me testimonials, Jean Gibb and Sarah Kendrick (**Vol 1, Appendices W&X**) praise the very high level of self-awareness in the students on placement in their schools which enables them to take on more complex cases than their contemporaries on other courses and also work relationally at a deeper level. Sarah also highlights the benefits of the structured appraisal process for the placements which is both 'robust and discursive' enabling students and supervisors to address all areas of competence in a developmental way. Both Cluster Managers highlight the benefits of students' systemic understanding of working in the school context. Both of them suggest that the tutors' experience of having worked in a school setting has been valuable in developing this aspect of the courses. Practice into theory.

The emphasis on play has also had a positive impact. Jean is impressed with the use of role play on the course to enhance and develop students' creative communication skills and use of supervision. She suggests that this is a key reason that Place2Be students can form more effective relationships with their clients and supervisors than Volunteer Counsellors from other courses and sources.

I have had lots of very positive anecdotal feedback from School Project Managers (SPMs) about students, but wanted to gather their views in a more systematic way. In July 2014 I sent out 3 Survey Monkey questionnaires, one for each course, inviting SPMs to comment on the quality of the graduates/trainees in comparison with other Volunteer Counsellors (VCs). The findings highlight the particular

benefits of a specialised and embedded training programme to the field (Full report **Vol 3, 11**).

### ***4.3 Impact on the profession and wider field***

There is a well-established need for early intervention in child mental health (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2010; Nuffield Foundation 2012) and Place2Be is addressing this with its work in schools. There is also a nationwide shortage of training programmes which specialise in counselling children (Keggereis, 2006). By offering a fully validated and accredited training pathway which also knits in with existing adult training nationwide, we can greatly increase the number of people specifically trained to work with children and young people.

The Place2Be professional qualifications pathway is unique in its delivery of an accessible, comprehensive, accredited, nationwide pathway in counselling children which is supported by, and an integral part of, a leading service delivery organisation. All participants, whether they step off at Level 2 or MA level, will take with them skills and knowledge which will benefit the children that they work with and which they will share with others in their workplaces.

Students who go on to qualify with Place2Be are competent, ethical and highly self-aware practitioners who raise counselling standards in schools and other agencies. Both Basi Amodu and Keren Richardson (**Vol 1, Appendices A&E**) are working for the Catholic Children's Society as school counsellors. The SENCO<sup>3</sup> at Keren's school (**Vol 1, Appendix J**) highlights Keren's confidence in working with all parts

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<sup>3</sup> Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

of the school system and offering a 'fresh pair of eyes' to examine concerns in the school. Basi's supervisor (**Vol 1, Appendix I**) is equally impressed with Basi's capacity to work with parents and teachers as well as children. This is a gratifying impact of the systemic aspects of the course. These perceptions, whilst anecdotal, indicate that the training is, as external examiner Maggie Robson suggests, 'fit for purpose' (**Vol 1, Appendix P**). Some graduates (including Wendy Smith's Testimonial **Vol 1, Appendix D**) from our Postgraduate Diploma have reported needing to 'Place2be-ify' agencies and schools in which they work because what they found was a basic lack of boundaries/facilities/supervision/ assessment procedures. The Place2Be has always believed passionately in the need for clear boundaries and high quality supervision. It is good to know that these values are reinforced by the courses and being enacted in the wider field.

The development of the professional qualifications field has brought us into contact with and had an impact on our validating and accrediting bodies UEL, BACP and CPCAB which represent the academic aspects of the wider field. David Rose and Aneta Tunariu from UEL in their testimonial (**Vol 1, Appendix Q**) suggest that the collaboration with Place2Be has been an essential element in their commitment to 'real-world focus'. They see the programme as a 'benchmark for national quality in voluntary sector counselling training'. Bringing our practice-led model and expertise to UEL has therefore had an impact on other courses in the School of Psychology which will in turn have an impact on the wider psychology and counselling fields. David and Aneta also highlight my and the MA programme's commitment to evidence based research and Mick Cooper, formerly from Strathclyde University now at Roehampton (**Vol 1, Appendix R**) also notes the positive impact that this will have on a very under researched field.

All of the testimonials from academic colleagues and collaborators highlight the uniqueness of the training journey and its academic rigour. Maggie Robson, our external examiner (**Vol 1, Appendix P**) suggests that the professional qualifications programme has ‘changed the landscape’ of child counselling and that my ‘attention to detail, therapeutic passion and academic rigour provide a bedrock and the driving force of the training’. Fiona Ballantyne Dykes from CPCAB (**Vol 1, Appendix S**) sees the programme as setting the benchmark for future trainings and highlights the benefits of the courses being on the QCF (Qualification and Credit Framework) and the impact that this will have, including increased accessibility through funding opportunities. She too notes my drive to realise my vision.

We are extremely fortunate in having several very eminent and highly regarded outside speakers, many of whom have published widely and all of whom are established teachers and practitioners in the field of counselling and psychotherapy. They have all been willing to return to the programme again and again because they are impressed with the quality of the course and the students. Monica Lanyado, Emilia Dowling and Renos Papadopoulos (**Vol 1, Appendices T, U&V**) from the BAP, the Tavistock and Essex University respectively, all express admiration for the level and depth of the student understanding of the work. Monica has noted a continued ‘maturing and prospering of Place2Be’ thanks to the development of the professional qualifications pathway. They are all impressed by the structure, relevance and quality of the course and this is praise indeed from established teachers in the field of child psychotherapy and systemic family therapy.

All three CPCAB awarded courses are now on the QCF which means they are mapped into national standards. This, in turn, means there is an established and nationally recognised set of assessment criteria for counselling children all the way

from Level 2 through to Masters level. These offer a set of standards for other organisations wishing to offer courses in counselling children.

I have now been invited to join the Expert Reference Group for the development of a BACP Children and Young People Curriculum. This invitation suggests that the practice-led pathway I have created is highly regarded in the wider field and that the thinking and theoretical frameworks we have evolved can become part of a much bigger picture. I am looking forward to testing out the robustness of the pathway and the model with other teachers in the field of counselling children and young people.

All of this suggests that our integrative, practice-led model is feeding into a larger conversation about best practice in the wider field of counselling children. At the heart of the Place2Be national conference for Child Counsellors in 2015, will be the Place2Be integrative approach and materials I have written for the professional qualifications programmes.

## Chapter 5. Am I doctoral?

As noted above I enjoy filling in forms. My successful applications for university validation and BACP and CPCAB accreditation were processes that challenged me to answer to specific criteria meaningfully and beyond simple box-ticking. I approach all reporting back processes in a similar way. In this chapter I am going to use this competency to evidence all the Level 8 Professional Doctorate descriptors by way of completing the form I have created below. The descriptors are set out as headings and addressed in turn. Where specific criteria (found on page 28 of the programme handbook) as well as the Level 8 descriptors are addressed, this will be noted in the body of the text in *italics*. In this way I intend to demonstrate my competencies in action as well as in the evaluation of evidence presented.

### 5.1 Professional Context

#### 5.1.1 Excellent Practitioner

It would be impossible to fulfil my role as Programme Leader credibly without outstanding levels of practitioner competence. I have several different functions within Place2Be as counsellor, teacher, manager, supervisor, author of courses and spokesperson for Place2Be. Within the organisation I must act as a link between the field and the senior executive team. I also have to be managed and supervised as well as managing and supervising others and this ensures dynamic collaboration and creative solutions; I must think and work autonomously but I am also required to be team player.

In creating the professional qualifications pathway I have demonstrated my ability to '*conceptualise, design and implement work based projects*' which are at the '*forefront*' of my field. The pathway is unique in the field of child mental health in offering a complete, accessible and practice-led training which is *useful* to a wide range of *specific audiences* from parents to master practitioners. The testimonials

(**Vol 1, Appendices A-X**) examined in **Chapter 4** of this document are evidence of this.

Outside the organisation I have had many opportunities to disseminate and discuss the work of Place2Be (e.g. BAATN Podcast and Therapy Today **Vol. 2 PW 9** and the Sage Handbook Chapter **Vol 2 PW 8**), which suggest that I am regarded by others in the field as a practitioner of standing.

### **5.1.2 Ethical Understanding**

Feedback from my Registration Panel and from our most recent External Examiner's visit noted a lack of explicit reference to ethical understanding in my Context Statement and student work respectively. I realised that, despite being very familiar with the BACP Ethical Framework and introducing it to students from the Level 2 Course onwards, it was not always in the foreground of my thinking even when discussing ethical dilemmas. My understanding had, perhaps, stopped evolving and gone underground. I have made some changes to the programmes to address this and we are now ensuring that an explicit acknowledgement and discussion of ethical practice is a consistent thread throughout all the courses.

The new draft BACP Ethical framework (still in consultation at the time of writing) is timely for me and has enabled me to look afresh at the values and principles outlined in it. There is a new additional paragraph which presents challenges to institutions offering training. It reads:

'All providers of training and education will model high levels of good practice in their work..., ' (BACP, 2014)

The key issue here is the undertaking to 'model good practice' in my work. My 'work' is multi-functional. My practice as a counsellor is very different from my work as a trainer or manager. The training role is to teach, challenge and assess

students' competency. These activities are not part of my role as a counsellor for children and young people. At the moment the Ethical Framework does not delineate the different functions of trainer and therapist. Reading the framework, trainees could be led to believe that their trainers are going to 'model good practice' as therapists. They could rightly expect an intensely intimate and unconditionally positive relationship and experience massive disappointment and frustration when this is not forthcoming. The framework as it stands leaves trainers open to accusations of professional misconduct. I have had personal experience of managing a student issue in this context which has significantly informed my position (see **5.3.4** below) and have participated in the BACP consultation as a result of this understanding. I am very clear about this delineation of function (see **5.1.4** below) and this is explicitly addressed with students from the outset.

Another headline ethical dilemma for me is the question of whether charities generally and Place2Be in particular can be an oppressive force against those they seek to 'support'. It is powerful to give and can be diminishing to receive. In giving, am I hanging onto the power and keeping those around me needy and disempowered? I have looked at and challenged the language we used in Place2Be and asked whether it actually keeps people in their places. When we talk about 'areas of high deprivation' or families who are 'hard to reach' there is an implication that these people are not us; that we have something good and they do not have it. These terms do not respect or enable the people they describe; they divide, separate and demonise. From the Level 2 Course onwards the students are encouraged to really examine why they are here. What is in it for them? (Adams, 2014) (See also discussion of the 'wounded healer' phenomenon below **5.3.2**). They are also encouraged to become conscious of the language they use and the impact it can have. It is always a challenge for trainee counsellors to consider that their motives to help others are anything other than pure, but an acknowledgement of the



counsellor's own narcissistic needs renders him/her more human/congruent and more available for authentic connection.

Another ethical challenge is that our courses cost money and as such our students have money and therefore come from a fairly narrow economic demographic. The challenge for me is wanting to recruit a diverse range of students that reflects the demographic of our schools when it is a training that is prohibitively expensive for most people. Whilst we offer bursaries and direct candidates towards other sources of funding there is no doubt that we lose many able people because of the cost and this is hard. From an ethical point of view I am comfortable that students are getting value for money. We do not aim to make a profit from our courses only to break even. Students get more hours of teaching and individual tutorials than students on many full time bachelor's programmes, which are almost twice as expensive. I am brutally efficient with our resources. We have also ensured that the accredited Postgraduate Diploma can be completed in two years rather than three to limit the cost to students in fees, child care and days off work. This year's first year cohort, both ethnically and in terms of income, is the most diverse to date but there is still work to be done to make the courses more financially accessible.

It is important to acknowledge the financial pressures of running this department and this presents me with a further ethical challenge which is one of recruiting enough students to make the programme financially viable whilst ensuring that the students we recruit are suitable. As a service delivery organisation my gate-keeping function is sharply focussed. I take this responsibility especially seriously because I live with the consequences of these decisions every day. There are many candidates that I have turned away from our Level 3. Many of these students take their money elsewhere and secure places on other courses which do not perhaps feel the same level of responsibility for gate-keeping as I do. I would prefer to risk

making a financial loss on the courses than send an inadequately competent counsellor into the field.

It is not, however, just cost that excludes people from training to become counsellors it is also the approach and philosophy of the whole psychotherapeutic community. As stated above, traditional psychotherapy theory is deeply rooted in white, middle class, heterosexual, able bodied, Euro-American thinking. Ethically I am painfully aware of how the model itself can exclude people and an example of my commitment to ongoing dialogue is my collaboration with BAATN (the Black and Asian Therapists' Network) which represents a quest for more universal ways of working (**Vol 2, PW 9**). My commitment to using plain language is informed by my desire to conduct meaningful conversations with as many people as possible.

It is this ethical commitment to dialogue and finding more universal ways of thinking and working that has led me to an integrative approach. TimBond (2010) proposes that the ethics and values of particular therapeutic models can be at odds with each other, which would imply that integration is ethically problematic. His suggestion is that those of a person centred persuasion have a purely 'the client knows best' position and those from a psychodynamic background have a purely 'therapist knows best' position and these are ethically opposed values. The reality from my experience is that most person-centred counsellors acknowledge that having trained they have more knowledge about the human condition than their clients. Also that most psychodynamic counsellors strive towards respecting and authentically joining with the client where they are. The polarity is no longer there in reality; practice in Place2Be does not suggest a clearly defined distinction between person centred and psychodynamic practice.

For me humanistic principles offer an aspirational attitude. I aim, as a counsellor, to offer my young clients my absolute confidence in their capacity to find their own solutions. I believe that this attitude is nourishing and provides the right environment for a child or young person to grow. However, I cannot pluck this attitude out of the air. I need tools to help me think; theories which can help me to manage and make use of extreme and uncomfortable responses to my clients and stay with them in a compassionate and connected way. When I am overwhelmed by sleepiness, or irritability or disgust in the room with a client, psychodynamic and systemic ideas help me to stay with the interaction rather than act out. They offer me tools to keep thinking which can lead to a greater understanding of the child. The greater my understanding of the child and of myself, the more readily I can offer empathy and Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR).

My role as Programme Leader has offered much *experience and acute awareness of ethical dilemmas*. In consultation and collaboration with others I have had to navigate a path through *different ethical codes/traditions that may come into conflict*. Each ethical dilemma is unique but learning from all of them has fed back into the management of the courses (see especially **5.3.4** below).

### **5.1.3 Context**

My first experience as an SPM (School Project Manager) was a brutal lesson in the need to *understand and work with complex, unpredictable and specialised work contexts* which did indeed require *innovative study and an exploration of the limits of my understanding* (see above **2.4**). Systemic Theory and especially the work of Elsie Osborne and Emilia Dowling (2003) was a massive help to me at this time. Their combination of psychodynamic and systemic ideas to think about how individuals react in systems/groups helped me to conceptualise my position as a counsellor in the school system. The systemic thread already existed in the original

version of the Level 3 Certificate but my experience ensured that this thread became a core element of all of the courses. Working in schools undoubtedly requires an understanding of how systems can work both healthily and unhealthily (see below 5.2.1).

There were many students from the first two cohorts on the Postgraduate Diploma whose feedback helped me to become *aware of how individual differences affect professional practice*. One example was my increased awareness of the cultural specificity of our training and how this could alienate participants, as well as clients, outside of the cultural majority in the counselling field (see above 5.1.2). I am much indebted to particular students who have taught me so much about my own culture and how it can and does oppress and alienate others. This has been my steepest learning trajectory. Basi Amodu, Samira Dhoparee (**Testimonials: Vol 1, Appendices A and B**) and Erika Smith were students on the first cohort of the Postgraduate Diploma and they bravely articulated the challenges they faced as Black or Asian students on the programme. At a residential weekend (in the summer of 2009) where students were invited to use their bodies to sculpt their experience of the group, these three students made an image of hear, see and speak no evil. In that moment I was paralysed and (uncharacteristically) struck dumb. It was my co-tutor Kelli, as a Korean-American, who was able to name the pain and complexity of the image. This moment was like a boulder thrown into the development of Place2Be training and the ripples have been significant. It led to me making links with the Black and Asian Therapists' Network (BAATN) and I attended some trainings there delivered by Isha Mackenzie-Mavinga. These workshops and Isha's book (Mackenzie-Mavinga, 2010) have helped me to understand deeply that culture and identity are embodied. In my culture, verbal expression is privileged above others and there are aspects of me and my identity which cannot be expressed in words. On the workshop days at BAATN as a minority member of the

group I was acutely aware of the laughter in the room and that I wasn't getting any of the jokes. I was not in rhythm with everyone else. One of my former students Abigail Baah (**Testimonial, Vol 1, Appendix G**) attended one of these workshops at the same time as me. As a Ghanaian woman she experienced the day as 'coming home' and inspirational. Our discussions afterwards about our relative feelings of attunement and belonging are, I think, an important factor in her feeling supported by me and by the programme (see **4.1.2**). This also underlined for me the importance of offering students non-verbal means of exploring and expressing their experience and makes sense of the use of play, creativity and experiential learning on our courses

This learning curve is far from over but there has been change. Both the Level 2 and 3 courses acknowledge and examine the culturally specific nature of the training and encourage learners to become aware of their own culture with all of its attendant assumptions and beliefs. Renos Papadopoulos (**Testimonial, Vol 1 Appendix V**) expresses his admiration of our students as 'thoughtful, sensitive, reflective, intelligent, challenging and committed' in their exploration of issues of cultural difference. My goal is not to fill the majority culture with guilt and shame which paralyses and silences dialogue but to encourage curiosity and invite exploration. Inspired by Colin Lago and Val Watson (Lago, 2006 & 2011) my approach has been to shift the lens away from seeking to understand those who are different, which can deepen divisions, towards seeking to understand the cultural identity and assumptions of the self and examining how these impact others. This *distinct and innovatory* response to the contextual issue of difference is evidenced by the Therapy Today Article (**Vol 2, PW9**) and the Place2Be Blog (**Vol 2, PW11**).

#### **5.1.4 Responsibility**

The role of 'Programme Leader for Professional Qualifications' was a brand new one when I took it up in 2007. It has only been by *doing* the job and *participating in consultation in an informed empowering and accessible way* that my responsibilities have become more clearly articulated. The steepest learning for me in terms of role definition has been how to be both tutor and leader of programmes.

Vicki Smith (2011) suggests that the qualities students most value in counselling tutors are similar to those valued by counselling clients in their counsellors: acceptance, warmth, openness, empathy, equality and modelling. As a tutor on the Level 3 course I had felt confident that I could offer these qualities to my students. However, the start of the Postgraduate Diploma in 2008 changed this. Students on the first two cohorts were especially anxious because the course was new and there was no evidence (in the shape of living breathing former students) that the course was survivable. Kelli and I were unaccustomed to this level of hostility in the training room (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al, 1999; Youell, 2006) and we had to learn quickly how to make the best use of it to benefit student learning and look after ourselves. A student complaint at the start of the second year (see **5.3.4**) is evidence that we were not entirely successful in this, but we learnt a great deal along the way.

It was clear early on that we needed to delineate the teaching and assessment function from the emotional processing function (Yalom, 1985). To this end in the second year we appointed group analysts to run the experiential groups. In the third year we also changed the seating arrangement in the training room so that the chairs were in two rows for the taught sessions and in a circle for the experiential group and workshop sessions. This sent a clear signal about the function of

whoever was running the session and, I think, has had a positive impact on tutor student relationships.

In the third year of the programme, Dee Ingham joined the team as second year tutor and this altered the shape of the teaching team. Now Kelli focussed all of her energy and time on Year 1, whilst Dee focussed on Year 2. This enabled me be half time in both, which offered students continuity and a less immersed tutor presence. My status as Programme Leader with a helicopter view has been reinforced and offers a containing function for students when they are wrestling with difficulties with the group and/or the course. However, it also moves me into a more explicitly managerial position with Kelli and Dee who were formerly peers. This shift in dynamic was managed openly in supervisory sessions with Peter Wilson. This reflective process has helped me to realise that I do not want to move too far away from *doing* the counselling work and delivering the training. They are what energise and give meaning to my role. And yet, as the organisation expands and the volume of training we deliver gets bigger, I also have to *accept high levels of responsibility for self, others and the profession as a whole* which could mean delivering less and overseeing and managing more. Getting the balance right is an ongoing challenge.

#### **5.1.5 Commitment**

The Professional Qualifications department has built-in processes for *continuous self-assessment and opening up of work for critical scrutiny by experts both inside and outside the immediate professional field* and, as stated above, I welcome these processes as a structured way of *thinking* about what we *do*. It has been much harder to write this thesis because it is not just about the products I have been part of making, but also about me. Being personally scrutinized by experts has been much more nerve-wracking. I am much happier being an advocate and champion for Place2Be.

I don't think there is anyone who would doubt my commitment. Testimonials from close colleagues (**Vol 1, Appendices L-O**) describe me as doggedly determined, passionate, tireless, visionary, driven, energetic, persevering, tenacious etc. It is for me to examine the motives for this commitment which can sometimes manifest itself as too many hours at work and not enough sleep or time with family. I need to be aware of the line between commitment and manic defence against some 'nameless dread' (Bion, 1962). And yet the new draft BACP ethical framework (BACP, 2014) challenges me to take care of myself as a practitioner 'keeping a healthy balance between our work and other aspects of life'. Perhaps the successful completion of this doctoral process will enable me to own my strengths more readily and not feel the same sometimes desperate need to prove my worthiness by contributing to an external noble cause, albeit a cause that carries deeply resonant personal meaning for me .

## **5.2 Professional Knowledge**

### **5.2.1 Knowledge**

I know and I know that I know	I know, but I don't know I know
I don't know, but I know I don't know	I don't know and I don't know I don't know

Like most ideas, this one is not new. 14<sup>th</sup> Century Tajik poet, Ibn Yamin Faryumadi said that there were four kinds of man:



One who knows and knows that he knows... His horse of wisdom will reach the skies.

One who knows, but doesn't know that he knows... He is fast asleep, so you should wake him up!

One who doesn't know, but knows that he doesn't know... His limping mule will eventually get him home.

One who doesn't know and doesn't know that he doesn't know... He will be eternally lost in his hopeless oblivion!

From a personal point of view, I am driven by an insatiable curiosity. There is so much more to know and find out about. My knowledge can be divided into the four domains outlined in the table above, which is a little like a Johari window:

- Everything 'I know that I know' has to be seen in the context of the other three windows.
- As a teacher, much of the time I am encouraging students to uncover and name what they already know but have dismissed as irrelevant or unimportant. Writing this section of my Context Statement is challenging me to do the same.
- Life has to be approached with humility, and knowing and acknowledging what I do not know can help me to meet others with openness and curiosity rather than judgement and assumption
- And then there is the bottomless pit of not even knowing that I don't know and this is the most worrisome domain of all. It is from this fourth window that oppression and ignorance come. It is also my realisation of this window that makes this work so exciting. There is so much more to find out.

Every time something moves from one domain to another, more enlightened one, I am more able to understand another human being.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC, Confucius wrote:

‘I hear and I forget

I see and I remember

I do and I understand.’

I have learnt so much in the past 13 years about being a leader, being a teacher and being a counsellor and what has stimulated that learning more than anything else is the dynamic between *doing* and then teaching counselling. It is the children, my students and my colleagues at Place2Be who have taught me most and who stimulate me to find out more. All of my Public Works are the product of an ability to *reflect on and develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of my own work based and life learning*. I have been engaged in ‘Action Science’ (Bager-Charleson, 2010), integrating my experience as a counsellor and as a trainer with evolving theory to bring about change. Reflection and deeper knowledge are facilitated by the *thinking* spaces which are embedded in the structure of Professional Qualifications Department (discussed below **5.3.2**).

My clinical knowledge is most clearly presented under the headings outlined in the Place2Be Therapeutic Approach (**Vol 3,1**) of Relationship, Self-Awareness and Play:

- **Relationship:**

At the heart of what I know is the assumption that human beings are orientated towards forming relationships and that the nature of these relationships will affect

the development of the self. This assumption is supported by an understanding of attachment theory and developments in this field and the field of neurobiology. Human beings need secure early relationships in order to develop healthily. Through these secure relationships children's brains develop to evolve a coherent narrative about themselves and they are then able to function healthily and productively in society. The therapeutic process with children is developmental in that it supports children in the evolution of a coherent personal narrative. We are in the business of forming relationships with children so that they can tell their own stories.

My approach embraces the idea of child development as the evolution of many layers of self, from the preverbal and sensory to the verbal and narrative. Counsellors and psychotherapists working with children must learn to engage with all of these layers of self (see below **5.2.4**). Therapeutic change is not possible with verbal interaction alone. Stern et al (1998), Lanyado (2004) and Schore (2011) support the idea that transformational relationships are those where there is authentic engagement by therapist with all realms of the explicit and implicit self. The therapist must be fully and honestly themselves with a 'personal signature' (Stern et al 1998, Lanyado, 2004), using all senses and non-verbal cues to connect with their clients, in order to bring about real change.

Human beings develop in response to the needs and mores of the society in which they live. Participating in what Daniel Stern (2004) calls the 'intersubjective matrix' is how cultural identity is shaped and each society has its own needs and priorities. Identity, as well as being unique and personal, is also culturally specific. Children need to be supported through telling their stories in being able to participate usefully in their own communities.

As noted above (**5.1.3**), to work effectively as a counsellor in schools it is essential to think systemically, as well as psychodynamically, and beyond the dyad of the therapeutic relationship. It is important to develop an understanding of social and cultural context. I have made use of my experience in schools and the work of Isca Salzberger Wittenberg (1999), Biddy Youell (2006), Dowling and Osborne (2003) and, more recently, McLaughlin and Holliday (2014) to develop my knowledge of working within a school setting and engaging parents and teachers in the therapeutic process. I define a system as a group of two or more people with a shared set of beliefs and a common purpose: a family, a place of worship, a workplace, a school, a gang etc. Systems may have sub systems: a couple in the family, a class in a school, friendship groups within a class, the senior management team or the governing body in the school. The shared set of beliefs and the common purpose may be agreed and contracted (explicit) or unspoken but no less understood (implicit). For example the school's purpose is explicitly to educate children. Its beliefs might be that girls do better than boys (explicit), that teachers must be in control (explicit) but that boisterous behaviour is macho and undesirable (implicit). All these beliefs, whether explicit or implicit, influence behavior and decision-making.

A problematic system tries to maintain itself by any means – not all of which are beneficial to all its members. Sometimes one child in a family or a class may be the 'naughty one'. Provided that child remains naughty, the homeostasis of the class or family is maintained. Change can be difficult. If the child changes then everyone else must change too. It can be more comfortable for the class or the family if this child does all the naughty. The child's function is to hold everyone else's naughtiness as well as his/her own. It can be in everyone else's interest to keep the

child naughty (Youell, 2006). Systemic thinking is about viewing children in their relational and social contexts. Everyone belongs to a unique set of systems and may have a different function in each one. As a counsellor in a school setting, thinking systemically can increase our understanding of what is driving and maintaining a child's behaviour or unhappiness. All behaviour makes complete sense and is completely logical in the context in which it takes place. This is a non-demonising approach. The child is not the problem, the problem is the problem (Dowling and Osborne, 2003).

The school counsellor must consider how the systems of home, school and the counselling service fit together for the child. Often the child's difficulties are exacerbated or maintained because there is a clash. The school-based counsellor can take what Dowling and Osborne (2003) call the 'helicopter view' and empathically enable individuals within the different systems involved with the child to articulate and acknowledge their conflicting beliefs and assumptions and negotiate a shared perspective and approach. This can break the cycle of suffering for the child and also others in the child's systems. How this plays out in practice is explored in my chapter 'Becoming and Integrative Practitioner' (**PW8**).

There are benefits and challenges, for the school counsellor, in being both a part of the school system and outside of it. Striking that balance is something that I have learnt, from my practice as a counsellor and as a School Project Manager for Place2Be, to do well. As a School Project Manager I was once described by the Head Teacher as 'unobtrusive but everywhere'. I took this to mean that I had found a way to be both observer and participant in the school system (see **2.4, 2.5** and **5.1.3** above) and that the perspective that this offered the school was valued.

Bronfenner's Ecological Systems Theory as described by McLaughlin (McLaughlin & Holliday, 2014) depicts the child's environment as a widening series of concentric circles from the immediate and individual microsystem, through to the ideological and legal macrosystem. Place2Be's service is an embedded, school-based service that takes account of the influence of all of these systems on individual children: the Place2Be Counsellor is supervised by the School Project Manager, who is supervised by a Cluster Manager, who is supervised by a Service Manager, who, in turn is informed and supported by a Head of Service and organisational and governmental policies and research. These layers of thinking, from the 'microsystem' of the room all the way to the political and cultural 'exosystem and macrosystem' (McLaughlin and Holliday, 2014) can support the 'helicopter view' and enable the School Project Manager to participate fully in the school system and form strong relationships with families, whilst maintaining a firm foothold in the wider perspective.

I am committed to ensuring practitioners work ethically and within their competence and develop an understanding of a breadth of specialist interventions so that they can form relationships with, or make appropriate referrals to, other agencies when necessary. My trainings actively promote a sound understanding of multi-agency work and recent government initiatives.

- **Self-awareness**

Every therapeutic relationship is a co construction and the influence of the therapist cannot be ignored. For this reason self-awareness is critical. The therapist must be

clear about their implicit motivations for working therapeutically with children and where their emotional responses to the children are coming from (Adams, 2014). It is compulsory for Place2Be students to undergo one to one therapy whilst in training and there is a personal development group as part of both the Level 3 and Postgraduate Diploma courses. As stated above, what takes place in the therapeutic space with children is often not explicit or verbal. Therapists must have an understanding of unconscious as well as conscious processes. I have drawn on a psychodynamic understanding of transference, counter transference and projective identification to make sense of the sometimes overwhelming discomfort of being with some children. With this framework counsellors can develop the capacity to both observe and participate and thereby learn how to make best use of clinical supervision. Supervision is seen as a continuation of the session rather than something separate. Like the maternal reverie described by Bion (1962) supervision is a process of holding the child in mind.

Through my practice as a counsellor and as a teacher, I have become more aware of my own cultural assumptions. It is important that counsellors and psychotherapists continually increase understanding of their own early life experiences and how these may be limiting or enhancing their ability to helpfully connect with a diverse range of others. Ethical counselling training must have, at its core, the constant challenge to articulate cultural beliefs and assumptions. Counsellors need to be clear about their own cultural identity and how this comes into their work (see **5.1.2**). It is also important to view psychotherapeutic theory through a cultural lens. Many of the ideas at the heart of this field of work are based on Euro-American assumptions and beliefs. We do not have all the answers, there are many 'unknown unknowns'.

Therapeutic skills are rarely discussed in counselling and psychotherapy literature and if they are it tends to be in the verbal domain. As stated above, a significant part of the work with children is non-verbal. The use of video to analyse and critique therapeutic interactions is enormously helpful in enhancing counsellors' awareness of exactly what they are doing or not doing to helpfully connect with the client. Non-verbal interaction is difficult to record in writing. My students' awareness of themselves in practice helps them to hone and develop their therapeutic skills.

Ethical practice requires a high level of self-awareness. Ethical frameworks can guide our thinking but at the heart of sound practice is personal responsibility and the capacity to honestly acknowledge the roots of our moral position.

- **Play and metaphor**

Play is the language that young children use to evolve their narrative and for this reason has a serious developmental function. Through play children learn to experiment, solve problems, co-operate and develop an understanding of others. Through play, children learn to think. Young children will rarely verbalise their difficulties but most are able to use play and creativity to explore their understanding of the world and their own place within it. My trainings emphasize the need for therapists to be able to engage playfully with children at whatever developmental stage of play the children are at.

In engaging therapeutically with children it is important to trust the child's process, respecting and honouring their chosen media and metaphor. However, my



approach cannot be described as purely child centred or 'non-directive'. Children need an enlivening and active presence (Alvarez, 2012) in order to develop a sense of themselves and their story. The child counsellor needs to be a vital participant in the play and this participation has an inevitable impact on the direction of the play. The 'transitional space' (Winnicott, 1991) is a dynamic co-construction. Counsellors are also responsible for negotiating the therapeutic frame and holding the boundaries of the session and, whilst the boundaries are negotiated with the child, this is a held and directed activity.

Play, in its broadest sense, is not just for children. Young people and adults benefit from working with metaphor. As Margaret Wilkinson (2006) suggests the right brain 'dreaming mind' makes implicit or unconscious material available to the left brain to examine and process. Metaphors light up this dreaming mind and can enable everyone to access otherwise inaccessible material. For this reason it is valuable for anyone on an adult counselling course to have experience of working with children who so readily and naturally engage in metaphorical processing. Volunteer counsellors at Place2Be on adult courses report that their work with children has enabled them to engage with their adult clients at a much deeper level. In this respect my trainings are having an impact on the field of adult as well as child counselling.

### **5.2.2 Acquiring Knowledge**

As a teacher I believe that, as Plutarch suggested in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, 'the mind does not require filling like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only requires kindling to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth' (Plutarch, 1986 p257). Preparing lectures, even those that have been delivered many times before, offers an opportunity to *think* and to re-evaluate theory in the

context of real life practice. For me knowledge is only valuable when it applies to practice. It is the students' practice which provides the 'kindling' and my role is to provide materials to help them build their knowledge in their quest for 'the truth'. When I joined Place2Be there was an immense amount of knowledge in the field that had not been explicitly articulated, evaluated or synthesized. Designing the Professional Qualifications pathway created an impetus to *develop advanced critiques and propose new approaches* and is evidence that I can *identify and appropriately use an extensive range of sources and knowledge of data in ways that are applicable to practice*.

### **5.2.3 Analysis of Knowledge**

Teaching others necessitates *critically evaluating advanced professional knowledge*. Dialogue with colleagues, students and people outside my field of work stimulate this critical stance and provides a further ignition to find out more, to examine further, to apply and test out then re-evaluate. I like a tidy story but the psyche is messy and complicated and I have had to learn to tolerate the complexity and the not-knowing and encourage the same tolerance in my students. The evolution of an integrative model is a process of dealing with *complexity, lacunae, and/or contradictions in the knowledge base* and striving towards *resolving those contradictions*. My capacity to tolerate this complexity and mess is enhanced by the *thinking spaces* embedded in the programmes (see below **5.3.2**).

### **5.2.4 Application of Knowledge**

Creating the teaching materials for the Professional Qualifications courses required me to *translate and disseminate theoretical knowledge into workable frameworks and knowledge*. It was clear that the Place2Be approach was integrative, so it was necessary from the outset to find a way of structuring that existing knowledge into a coherent framework. The adoption of the three domains of Relationship, Self-Awareness and Play as headings for the Core Model (**Vol 2, PW 1**) enabled me to

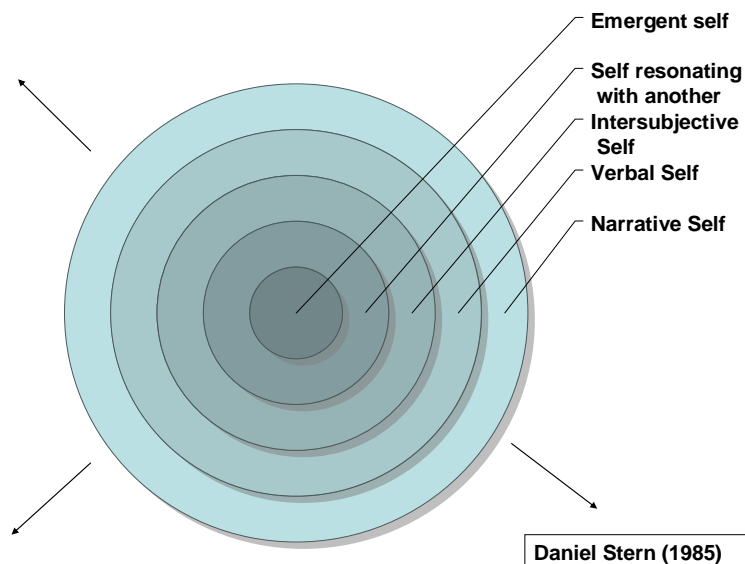
highlight the apparently contradictory philosophical positions of the field and seek out theorists who united and resolved those contradictions. Some integrative courses teach different approaches separately and leave the students to integrate the ideas by themselves (Lowndes & Hanley, 2010). We chose not to do this because it can lead to a great deal of energy being expended on highlighting the differences between schools of thought and promoting allegiances to one approach over another rather than getting to heart of what works in therapy. My Public Works offer an integrative model in an integrated way because that is how I think and practise as a therapist. Research into the effectiveness of Place2Be's school-based therapeutic interventions suggests that this integrative approach has a positive impact. Children's emotional and social behaviour is perceived by teachers and parents as having improved following a Place2Be one-to-one intervention (Lee et al, 2009).

Daniel Stern's child development model (Stern, 1985) suggests that a complete picture of child development can only be gleaned by considering both the 'clinical infant' of psychoanalysis and the 'observed infant' of psychology. Stern's attention to concrete observable fact alongside his acknowledgement of a palpable intersubjective matrix sits comfortably with me and provides a unifying context, where heterogeneous theories can sit together as complementary facets of the same thing. As Castonguay points out, we are all just 'trying to make sense of the same beast' (Castonguay, 2006). Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 2005, Geddes, 2006, Holmes, 2010), introduced on the Level 2 and 3 courses, is a perfect foundation to the complexity of Stern's layered model and recent developments in this field and in the field of neuroscience (Cozolino, 2006; Divino & Moore, 2010; Moore, 2000, Schore, 2007) are a key part of the Postgraduate Diploma. I also take much inspiration from Anne Alvarez (2012) and Monica Lanyado (2004) who

demonstrate very clearly that a psychoanalytic frame can comfortably dovetail with a deeply respectful and humanistic stance.

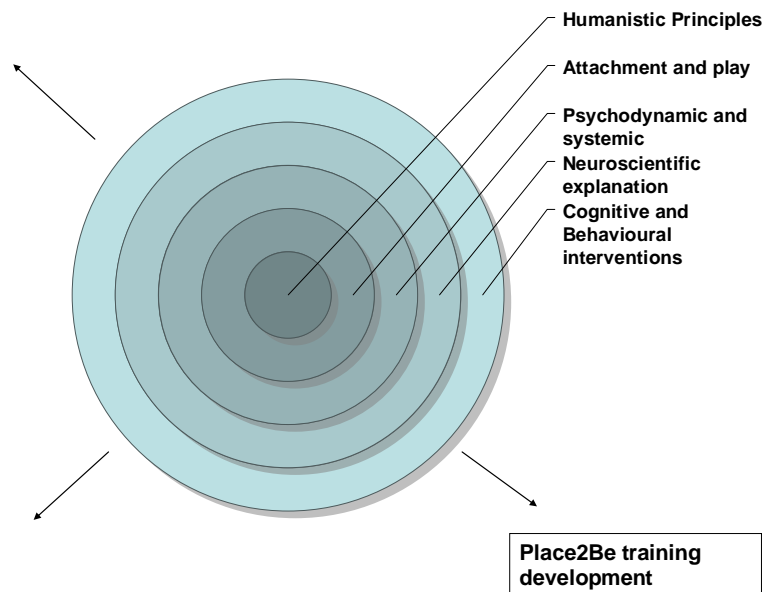
I have redrawn Stern's child development model here as a series of concentric circles because, as stated in **Chapter 2**, for me, that is a better description of development and growth in layers. Stern describes a process of rupture, repair and elaborate which leads to expansion of the intersubjective field. The outside of the circle needs to rupture for the next layer to grow. A little like a snake shedding its skin.

**Fig.9 Daniel Stern's Child development model**



The innermost three layers are pre-verbal but essential. In developing a child counselling training programme it is vital to consider how to engage with these three important domains of self. The development of an integrative theoretical model from Level 2 to MA mirrors and takes this into account. It can be described in a similar way, with the Level 2 learning at the centre:

**Fig. 10 Counselling training development**



The innermost circles of the training development are humanistic principles, attachment and play. At the start of their training journey, learners are invited to engage experientially with their pre-verbal selves in an accepting, warm and respectful environment. At this stage the emphasis is on child-centred principles inspired by Play Therapy (Axline, 1989 & 1990; Cattanach, 2003; Landreth, 2002). As students develop in their capacity to attune to embodied or pre-verbal communication, they engage with a more psychodynamic understanding of play (Winnicott, 1991; Klein, 1997; Lanyado, 2004; Alvarez, 2012) and this is woven together with systemic and neuro-scientific ideas which enable students to start to verbalise these pre-verbal processes. These ideas offer them a container in which to keep thinking when the emotional content of the counselling interaction becomes difficult to manage or understand.

My students and the children and young people that I work with provide me with a dynamic impetus to keep learning and to stay abreast of new developments in the field. The advantage of being a collaborative partner with UEL is that I have access

to a huge library of academic resources. This and my engagement in specialist CPD conferences and workshops ensure the programmes are refreshed and re energised year on year.

### **5.2.5 Synthesis of Knowledge**

In 2012 I was invited to write a chapter for a forthcoming SAGE handbook for counselling children. I brought Kelli in as co-author because she and I had evolved a shared theoretical perspective and language to describe an integrative approach. (Cooper & Swain-Cowper, 2014, **Vol. 2 PW 8**). This chapter challenged me to *expand and redefine knowledge* for an audience that is well-informed and already knowledgeable. Through the composite case study presented in the chapter it was possible to articulate the key aspects of my integrative approach in practice. The chapter demonstrates, for example, how developmental, systemic, humanistic and psychodynamic thinking can work together harmoniously and productively. Presentations and workshops that I deliver to non-counsellors require me to *synthesise information/ideas* in a different way, through the lens of a different workplace setting (see for example **Vol 2, PW10**).

I am now developing a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) curriculum for all senior clinicians and trainers at Place2Be so that knowledge generated by the Professional Qualifications courses can be disseminated systematically throughout the organisation. As Place2Be grows this is increasingly necessary and important.

### **5.2.6 Evaluation of Knowledge**

Assessing students' written assignments and their capacity to critically evaluate theory has been a great training ground for my own skills of evaluation. Wheeler (2000) highlights the challenge of evolving assessment criteria for counsellors and psychotherapists at all levels when most assessors agree that the competence of a

counsellor is best predicted by their interpersonal skills which are difficult to assess objectively or academically. McLeod (1992) underlines the fact that for assessment to be objective it must come from a number of sources but that all sources have limitations. Add to this the necessity of using criteria which marry with Higher Education Masters Level descriptors, and the task of evolving meaningful assessed components becomes ever more challenging (Wheeler & Miller, 2002). Liz Ballinger in *Therapy Today* (2013) reiterates these challenges amongst others and wonders where counselling training is best placed; in the private sector, or in Higher or Further Education? I would suggest that having a university validated training embedded in a service delivery organisation has enabled us to develop a rigorous critical and evaluative capacity in our students, an essential skill for counsellors, alongside stepped assessment criteria which are firmly rooted in practice.

On the Postgraduate Diploma the module Learning Outcomes are quite broad and dry (see Module Specifications, Student Handbook **Vol 2, PW 7.1**). As such, for each assessed component we have listed descriptors under the relevant learning outcomes so that students can clearly link the academic requirement to concrete and relevant criteria (see Mark Sheets for all assessment tasks in **Vol 2, PW 7.3**). This amount of detail has been driven by my need for a fair and solid assessment process and also student demand for clarity. Double markers are usually within 5 marks of each other. What was initially driven by my lack of confidence has evolved into a robust assessment framework. I would like to think that if a new tutor joined the programme they would be able to mark the essays as consistently as we do because the criteria are so clear.

This evolution of clear assessment structures has sharpened my ability to *accurately assess/report on my own...work* as well. This thesis and the annual reporting back processes (see for example **Vol 3, 6 & 7**) are testament to that.

## **5.3 Professional Practice**

### **5.3.1 Competency Skills**

The Place2Be Core Model (**Vol 2, PW1**) states that: 'The role of the therapist is to feel and think. To be both observer and participant'. This 'competency skill' is mirrored in Stern's model of attending to both 'clinical and observed infant' (see above **5.2.4**) and also in the collaborative and consultative structures built into the training programmes. As emphasized elsewhere, the process of devising the professional qualifications pathway has been a collaborative one. There have been *significant others in my chosen field* without whom these Public Works could not have happened. Kelli Swain-Cowper, Dave Exall and Peter Wilson have brought their expertise to the programmes and joined me in realising the vision of an accessible training pathway. As teachers and practitioners we 'participate' or *do* and in the *thinking* spaces that I have built into the structure we can 'observe' from a stance of *creative indifference*. The *thinking* spaces outlined below (**5.3.2**) offer me and the team an enlivening arena in which to generate new ideas and take *appropriate action* which further enables me to keep *developing skills* of moving between the stances of observer and participant and it is this dynamic which *ensures the validity and quality of our work*.

### **5.3.2 Self Appraisal and Reflection on Practice**

When I started training at London Marriage Guidance (LMG) in 1992 I had not even begun to consider my own story or what I was doing there. My conscious motivation to train as a counsellor was to 'help people' and my unconscious motivations were utterly unavailable for examination. After my Foundation Course it was suggested (kindly) that I take a year off before the Diploma to consolidate my learning and



deepen my self-awareness. I was mystified by the suggestion that my self-awareness needed deepening but did not want to jeopardise my place by being disagreeable. My self-awareness remains an ongoing journey that has been significantly facilitated by my training, my work as a therapist, my own therapy and my practice as a Buddhist.

The emphasis on self-awareness as a prerequisite for sound clinical practice is well documented (McLeod 2004; Mearns, 1997; Sanders, 2002; Lennie, 2007). This is especially true for working with children. The unhelpful aspects of the 'wounded healer' phenomenon are particularly relevant (Zerubavel, N. et al 2012; Wheeler, S. 2007; Barnett, 2007; Bager-Charleson, 2010). Children are less powerful than adults and an obvious repository for adult vulnerability. They can easily become servants to the narcissistic needs of 'wounded healers'. As such, it is essential that child therapists in training develop an understanding of what is powering their desire to be therapists (Adams, 2014). This is why self awareness is one of the cornerstones of the Place2Be Core Model (**Vol 1, PW1**) and the Therapeutic Approach (**Vol 3, 1**). Personal Development groups are a key component of the Level 3 and Postgraduate Diploma courses and I have successfully wrestled with the challenge of creating a safe enough space for students to risk confronting and managing internal and external conflicts (Payne, 2001; Robson and Robson, 2008). Personal therapy is mandatory on the Postgraduate Diploma. This emphasis on the need for self-awareness is mirrored in the establishment of *thinking* spaces for the training team which enable me to *habitually reflect on my own and others' practice so that self-appraisal and reflexive inquiry become intertwined*. There are nine significant thinking spaces outlined below which demonstrate my *professional entrepreneurialism* insofar as I have gathered together the necessary expertise to create a rigorously self-reflexive system which can continue to evolve *new or modified paradigms* for training counsellors for children and young people :

#### *5.3.2.1 Supervision*

Any course of six days or more involves 90 minutes of supervision for every two days trained. This supervision time offers tutors time to think about and discuss the group dynamics and progress and reflect on their training delivery.

#### *5.3.2.2 Postgraduate Diploma Programme Team meeting for tutors, Observation group facilitators and experiential group facilitators*

At these meetings we consider student feedback from the termly evaluations and also discuss issues that have arisen in the group and how these have manifested themselves in different parts of the course. This joined-up thinking offers us different perspectives on individual students which ensures balanced assessment. (McCleod, 1992).

#### *5.3.2.3 Programme Committee for Postgraduate Diploma and MA student representatives and the programme team, including administration staff*

This is a requirement of our UEL validation and a useful forum for student /programme consultation. Student representatives gather feedback from their colleagues and this is discussed and responded to in the meeting. (For Minutes see REP 2013/14 **Vol 3, 6**).

#### *5.3.2.4 Training Team meetings*

We have three sections in the Training Department: Professional Qualifications, Internal Training for all our paid and voluntary clinical staff and Schools and Communities Training for school based staff and all child care professionals. The team is supported by a team of co-ordinators and administrators (see **Fig. 1, 1.1 for**

**Training Org chart).** Once every two months the team meets so that everyone is up to date with all our training activity.

#### *5.3.2.5 CPCAB annual visits and external verification reporting processes*

I have enjoyed working with Fiona Ballantyne Dykes from CPCAB (see **Testimonial Vol 1, Appendix S**). There is a natural coherence between Place2Be's approach and that of CPCAB and Fiona has offered a fresh pair of eyes on the Level 2, 3 and 4 courses.

#### *5.3.2.6 Annual BACP Accreditation reporting processes*

BACP require us to report back annually. This process and the accreditation process itself were less enlivening than that of UEL although the assessment visit itself was interesting and challenging and offered yet another perspective on the whole offer.

#### *5.3.2.7 The Review and Enhancement and Collaborative Review Processes at UEL (Vol 3, 6 & 7)*

The annual review and enhancement procedure (REP) at UEL offers me a regular formal framework to assess developments on the Postgraduate Diploma and MA. This is a long and thorough reporting back process and worth the time. The reports are audited by UEL staff who sometimes make suggestions which can then feed into the following year's action plan.

The collaborative review process is five yearly and we have just completed our first since initial validation (**see Vol 3, 7**). Again this was a very thorough and rigorous process involving a panel of advisers and specialists from inside and outside the field.

#### *5.3.2.8 Training Committee which oversees the whole training team offer and reports directly to the Quality Committee*

The Training Committee is comprised of David Rose (Chair, Trustee and former Dean of Psychology at UEL), Catherine Roche (CEO), Peter Wilson (Senior Clinical Advisor), Fiona Pienaar (Director of Clinical Services), Kate Vintiner (Director of Business Development), David Exall (Head Trainer), 2 external advisers: Mary Stiasny (Institute of Education) and Sue Keggereis (University of Essex) and me. Meetings are convened quarterly to discuss the wider picture of the training field and where Place2Be sits within that. This committee acts as a conduit for Place2Be's greater prominence in the field of research and higher education.

#### *5.3.2.9 Mentors, friends and family*

As indicated earlier, I asked Gillian Walton to be my mentor through the early stages of the course. As my former tutor she was aware of my strengths and weaknesses and able to offer helpful and sometimes challenging solutions to what felt like intractable difficulties.

As a family we have had to endure many challenges in the past few years: illness, bereavement, elderly parents and an awful lot of teenage oestrogen. However, my family and friends have also offered a consistently unwoolly, focussed and practical perspective on most of the more difficult aspects of my work. They are not counsellors and I am not allowed to 'biodynamic-cabbage' at home or when I'm socialising. That has been good for my sanity.

### **5.3.3 Managing Continuing and Ongoing Learning**

Since taking up post in 2007 I have undertaken a Research MA and have now completed this Professional Doctorate. I was a late starter academically (see

**Chapter 2)** but now have a rampant enthusiasm for *autonomous and self-directed* learning. The focussed study of psychotherapy enlivens my practice as a counsellor and as a teacher. It helps me to *think*.

I am also passionate about ensuring the legacy of the professional qualifications department and seek to actively ignite in those that I manage and supervise 'an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth' (Plutarch, 1986, p257). We have two new members of the Postgraduate Diploma team, Ilaria Calussi and Maria Valdivia. Maria has already embarked on a Masters in Observational Studies at the Tavistock and Ilaria is keen to undertake further study once she has settled into her new role. Dee Ingham is half way through her Infant Observation Masters and Kelli Swain-Cowper is keen to build on the experience of co-writing the chapter for the SAGE Handbook (**Vol 2, PW 8**) and our plan is to write a book (or series of books) based on the whole Professional Qualifications pathway. Their enthusiasm and effectiveness in their roles depends on my capacity to relinquish the reins and delegate responsibility. I have therefore handed over increasing amounts of responsibility to Dee and Kelli especially and this has been a relief as well as a benefit to the energy and identity of the Postgraduate Diploma.

#### **5.3.4 Problem solving**

The most significant problems that have needed resolving over the past seven years have revolved around students and/or student feedback. Each cohort has a unique personality and the problems experienced are not always predictable. The *thinking* spaces outlined above (**5.3.2**) have enabled me to *isolate, assess and resolve* most of these issues in an *autonomous manner*. The most challenging problem I have experienced also generated the most learning and creativity. As mentioned above in **5.1.2**, in November 2009 a student from our first cohort put in an official complaint about me and Kelli to both UEL and BACP. The student had been asked to step back from the course pending an investigation into her suitability

to continue training as a counsellor. The complaint was lengthy and included a number of damning accusations, including that the procedures to exclude her from the course were not properly adhered to. Most of these accusations were dismissed and UEL did not pursue the complaint, but BACP decided that they would pursue the complaint against me because of the procedural issues. This was a massive personal as well as professional challenge. It awakened many sleeping demons for me and it was 11 months before the case was heard by BACP. The outcome was that the complaint about procedural errors on my part was upheld. It was acknowledged that I had approached this problem constructively and had done what I could to rectify the mistakes and this was taken into consideration and no sanctions were issued. It was a very difficult time. However, Place2Be and UEL were both behind me. My earlier lessons of being supported in my first school were important here. I was able to accept the help gratefully and also accept that with all new ventures there are mistakes. I was extremely and genuinely sorry for the unhappiness caused to the student but not flooded with the shame which would have led me to freeze or flee. Lessons were learnt and substantial changes were made to the policies and how they were presented in the student handbook the following year to ensure that all procedures were clear. Changes were also made to the assessment of students as colleagues. Previously we had no way of flagging up concerns about a student's professional conduct with their peers. Now we have termly tutor reports (see **Assessment Guidelines Vol 2, PW 7.3**) to ensure that conversations can take place at the end of each term about how the student is managing their interpersonal relationships in the group.

Another key learning from the complaint was that we needed to address student issues promptly and formally. We are now proactive in inviting students for meetings if we can see that their anxiety is beginning to obstruct their learning or participation in the group. We write up notes in the meeting and these are shared and agreed with the student before being filed. Since the third cohort we have not

experienced any of the more unhelpful dynamics of the first two years. Students have welcomed being noticed and the note writing is experienced as thoughtful and containing.

### **5.3.5 Communication presentation**

Since embarking on this doctoral study I have engaged more actively in *full professional and academic communication with others in my field*. Some engagement was already built into the structure of my role (see above **5.3.2**) but since 2012 I have taken significant steps to get out of the Place2Be bubble and more energetically engage in dialogue with others. This is evidenced by:

- The writing of the SAGE Handbook Chapter (**Vol 2, PW 8**)
- Being a founder member of the BAATN Trainer's Forum (see **Vol 1 3.11.2**)
- Presenting at education and health professionals conferences (e.g. **Vol, 2 PW 10**)
- Being interviewed for, and the use of findings from, my MA research (**Vol 3, 4.1**) in the Counselling MindEd e-portal module written by Kelli Swain-Cowper on Counselling Children in Primary schools  
(<https://www.minded.org.uk/mod/scorm/player.php>)
- The BAATN Podcast and Therapy Today article (**Vol 2, PW 9**)
- The Place2Be Blogs (**Vol 2, PW 11**)
- Helping to design and launch the first Place2Be Conference in February 2015
- This writing of this doctoral thesis

### **5.3.6 Evaluation/ Research**

In 2009-11 I completed a qualitative research dissertation MA with UEL (**Vol 3, 4.1**). I considered a range of methodologies to analyse my interview data (McLeod, 2001 Smith, 2008) and eventually chose Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I

am inclined towards qualitative enquiry because it has much in common with the process of therapy itself. Central to qualitative enquiry is the importance of reflexivity; the researcher owning his or her own perspective and the limitations of this. This commitment to reflexivity is at the core of the courses and central to the process of examining the public works presented here. I have always grounded my exploration in 'first-person experience and naïve inquiry' (du Plock, in Bager-Charleson, 2010 p.122) and have experienced this as a legitimate and useful process. I am not neutral or objective but rigorous and collaborative examination of my subjective experience alongside data gathered from students, colleagues and external assessors has flushed out my blind spots and enhanced my capacity for 'reflection-of-self in/on action', (Collins et al, 2010), thus increasing my stamina (ibid) and expanding the reach and possibilities of the programmes.

Over the past six years I have accumulated a comprehensive paper trail which evidences, in dry terms, the impact of my professional journey (e.g. external examiner reports, financial accounts, quantitative data regarding student demographics). I have also gathered 'wetter' evidence in the form of testimonials from key participants of this journey as part of this context statement (**Vol 1, Appendices A-X**). The evaluation forms for every course also offer some qualitative data which, in the annual Review and Enhancement Processes at UEL and CPCAB, I have examined as a way of evaluating the impact of each stage of the programme on individuals (**Vol 3, 6,7 & 8**).

Since submitting the first draft of my Context Statement in April 2013 (as noted in 4.3 above) I have conducted a nationwide survey of Place2Be School Project Managers to ascertain their experience of Volunteer Counsellors who are graduates of, or participating in, our Professional Qualification Courses (level 3, level 4 and PG Dip) see **Vol 3, 11**.



The discipline of qualitative methodology acquired on my MA has informed my approach to the mountain of documents which has grown over the past seven years. I am a practitioner researcher (Bager-Charleson, 2010) engaged in action research (Reason & Riley, 2008). I have engaged in both naïve and systematic gathering of data and I have processed the data in order to reach out for 'practical knowing in the service of ecological flourishing' (ibid p207).

The public works at the heart of this doctoral thesis therefore demonstrate *advanced research and development capability and advanced programme management skills which have been applied to my professional area of study.*

## **Chapter 6. Final Thoughts**

### **6.1 Personal Qualities**

Gathering testimonials from students and colleagues has been helpful in articulating both the qualities I am perceived as bringing to the work and the impact those have had from others' points of view. I have learnt that my sometimes evangelical enthusiasm can be overbearing and can inhibit dialogue, as evidenced by my early difficulties in my first school (2.4). However, in the testimonials, it is this enthusiasm that is highlighted as a quality that has inspired individuals and driven the realisation of the professional qualifications courses. In examining my impact it appears that the needy, noisy, extrovert in me has in fact had been a positive influence. I have succeeded in transforming my negative experiences into 'valuable wisdom and knowledge' (Bager-Charleson, 2010 p. 14). Also highlighted are my organisational skills, commitment to collaborative working, curiosity, interpersonal skills and also my resilience in the face of challenge. All of these strengths have been enabled and developed inside the crucible of my supportive relationships with mentors, co-workers and my administration team. Reading the testimonials has been heart-warming in the extreme although my internal critic is acutely aware of the voices that are missing. I am conscious of that the training can have a negative impact on some individuals and this could, in turn have a negative impact on the reputation of Place2Be and perhaps on the profession as a whole. The challenge remains to ensure that our admission processes protect those less suited to this type of counselling training and I think we are better at that than we were, as evidenced by a high level of satisfaction from graduates and a very good completion rate.

## **6.2 Head chef/ professional entrepreneur? (du Plock & Barber, 2008)**

‘You put yeast, flour, water and sugar together to make bread. The bread isn’t like any one of its ingredients, yet it contains all of them’ Virginia Satir. 1988 *The New Peoplemaking*

As a child I made puppet shows and plays to enthrall (and test the patience of) my parents and their friends; as a young adult I made theatre pieces and even tried to write a novel. It was a long time before I could relinquish the dream of being special. I wanted to change the world and I wanted to do it by myself. Some of this grandiosity and narcissism remains, as highlighted earlier, but I would probably not have been able to achieve what I have without a little of that.

As a child and adolescent I learnt what it was to be spiky and misunderstood. As a theatre practitioner I learnt the value of the whole being greater than, and different to, the sum of its parts as described by Virginia Satir above. As a Buddhist I learnt the value of benevolent authority in the shape of a mentor. My experience at Place2Be enabled me to internalise that concept, and a new experience of taking responsibility for my own mistakes and of something better being achieved in the end; rupture, repair, elaborate. As I stumbled through my early theatre career I accrued other skills such as filling in forms to apply for funding and communicating in plain language with people from outside my professional sphere. As a journalist and playwright I learnt the discipline of writing well and personally whilst sticking to someone else’s house style and meeting deadlines. I arrived in post as Programme Leader at Place2Be with the vision of developing the Postgraduate Diploma/ MA but the gaps in the pathway frustrated my need for a complete story. That led to the development of the Level 2 and 4 courses. It seems that I had amassed the

necessary combination of skills and understanding to blend and co-ordinate all of the ingredients.

I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to devise a training journey from start to qualification which was built on the solid foundation of Place2Be's (then) ten years of practice in schools. I did not have to create all of the elements of the journey alone or from scratch; Kelli Swain-Cowper's contribution to the Postgraduate Diploma programme development was at least as big as mine and there were other crucial collaborators and consultants as well. My role was as head chef. My background as a story teller drove me to put the pieces in the right order and to co-devise the pieces that were missing: beginning, middle and... well of course it's not the end is it? The dynamic cycle of rupture, repair, elaborate is never-ending. The goal is to launch people into their own unique pathways of lifelong learning and that never ends. This is just one story along the way. What began as a drip has developed into a steady stream which is slowly mounting in volume, intensity and reach. I have helped Place2Be articulate and build on what we do. Place2Be is now an even more active and confident part of the national and international conversation about best practice with children. I did that! I smiled as I wrote those words because there is still something slightly irksome to me about blowing my own trumpet. However, this has been a transformative process for me. I am genuinely proud of what I have achieved.

### **6.3 *So am I?***

So putting together the professional qualifications pathway was like being a head chef; bringing together people and ingredients in a fruitful combination. Writing this doctorate has been very different because the ingredients were all located inside of

me. The process was like trying to forge a relationship: Heady, exciting and 'very, very good' at the start, like a holiday romance; boring then tumultuous then frozen and 'horrid' in the middle; and finally breaking through to a solid, deeper and more compassionate and 'good enough' connection by the end. The endless re-writing truly challenged my capacity for intimacy, how can I stay enlivened and enlivening with this document or rather with my self? Like any relationship it had to have boring, confusing, uninspiring moments but these were punctuated by moments of clarity, hope and enthusiasm. I had lots of encouragement and support throughout, especially from close colleagues and my academic advisers, but getting all this down on paper was up to me and getting to the end has meant conquering some of those internal demons. Whilst I am still, on one level 'a little girl with a little curl right in the middle of her forehead', I am also a grown-up who is, I think, both 'very, very good' and 'horrid' sometimes but who has done enough 'good-enough' stuff to be called Dr Niki Cooper.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: Basi Amodu

Testimonial: Basi Amodu [basira69@hotmail.com]

### The impact on me personally

Niki Cooper was supportive whilst faced with institutionalised prejudice, being willing to tackle issues when they threatened my stability on the Post Graduate course.

She challenged me to look into my own self awareness and knowledge, she encouraged self belief in my own abilities, supported me to think, feel and learn more theoretically and trust both my intuition and experience in order to grow and learn more as a practitioner.

Niki also provided ongoing support during my Masters research project and had a real belief in the question.

### Impact on my career

Niki always told me the way to grow as a practitioner was to branch out from the Place2Be and learn about other organisations and ways of practising in the Child Counselling field. She supported my growth and exploration, through support for my professional membership of the BACP and in seeking accreditation. She has had a huge impact in regards to my continued professional development as a professional - always insisting that I never become complacent even with the excellent training I received.

### Impact on children

Niki's mantra to me was 'stay curious', she encouraged me to stay in the moment with the children, connect to the playful place within myself in order to meet the child where they are. The impact on the work with the children has been enormous, being present, not questioning but always thinking in the counselling space. Being that safe container has meant the children can have their process of self exploration and have been able to build an important healthy relationship with me as the safe adult in which to express and explore themselves and their life issues. This has had an impact on the children's integration both within the school and home systems, there has been improvements in concentration and peer relations and in some cases parents have been able to seek support, which has made change for the children more lasting.

### Impact on places

I have been able to establish appropriate boundaries and resources in the schools I currently work in that are not Place2Be schools. I have often had to re focus attention on the unheard voice of the child both with professionals and families. I have had to create a counselling space that can hold the children's confidential files, the children's private boxes with their creative explorations. I have worked with the schools to purchase appropriate and varied play materials and explained the need for a place that is separate to the school which has included removal of religious iconography or written educational targets on the walls. Over the course of the last 16 months the schools have respected and also appreciated the space and even asked to use the space for external professionals for

CAMHS assessments etc.

Impact on national and international field of child counselling

Through the PG Dip programme Niki devised she has created a wealth of practitioner/researchers of which I am one of the first, this is crucial to the ongoing research into child counselling and also supports the evidence based outcomes which are essential in the current funding climate. This has supported me recently having been nominated and shortlisted for a PEF award speaking with and informing potential corporate funders to continue funding child counselling in a national and international arena. My training background and current knowledge in the child counselling is being recognised as new and innovative and this was evidenced during the Mentalization Conference in 2012 I attended with many international and national practitioners engaging with me about my training background. More recently during an Anna Freud Recognising Emotional Abuse seminar, my fellow practitioners from the UK, Europe and US were interested in the Place2Be Model championed by Niki Cooper, she has become one of the standard bearers within our field of child counselling.

11.2.13

## ***Appendix B: Samira Dhoparee***

Testimonial 09.02.2013

Niki was my tutor for the both the Place2Be's Post Graduate Diploma and Masters. I really appreciated Niki's dedication to pioneering the course, however I felt that was not just about creating a course, exceptional as it was, but growing thoughtful, ethical and creative practitioners in child counselling.

As the first cohort in spite of challenges that arose along the way, I always felt that she remained committed to our individual and group learning. Niki showed a willingness to learn through the process and be able to step out of her comfort zone even as a tutor, to be exposed to not knowing everything and learning from us as students as much as I did from her. Although difficult at the time, I am able to appreciate her encouragement to look into my own processes more deeply, particularly being a quieter person and of a minority, especially because of her own willingness to stay with and grow through the process, however painful.

When undertaking the Masters I really found her to be as motivated and excited by my research as if it were her own and she took many steps to listen and to respond to struggles that my colleagues I faced with doing the research at the time.

I believe that that as a consequence, her continuous efforts greatly contributed to my own professional development as a child counsellor. In my continued work as a counsellor my supervisor has praised my commitment and consistency with the children and young people I work with, however challenging the work appeared. I am safe in my work but always willing to learn something new and be creative. I feel these qualities are attributed in part to Niki's own encouragement and the journey

that she initiated in me as my tutor, and to find my own voice personally and professionally

Most of all Niki has inspired me to keep on learning even beyond completing my qualification, and instilled in me the importance of putting children's emotional wellbeing at the centre of my practice as a child counsellor.

Samira Dhoparee

MA graduate (2012)



## ***Appendix C: Sarah Cavaliere***

20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

To whom it may concern

Re: Niki Cooper

Niki Cooper was the lead tutor on my Place2Be Postgraduate Diploma from September 2008 to July 2010. I believe Niki had a great impact on my learning experience, both as part of an experiential group, and in my personal process of training to be a counsellor. She had an ability to 'hold' the group, under circumstances which were at times very challenging. She therefore modelled the provision of a containing, thoughtful space while also maintaining her role as 'educator'. From this I learnt about the importance of the provision of a safe therapeutic space for children together with the ability to incorporate the role of educator in the supervisory aspect of my role as School Project Manager for Place2Be. In terms of group dynamics, I feel I was guided by Niki in how to be true to myself and my own felt response, but also how to remain sensitive to the needs and emotions of others in a group or system (eg the school where I now work and have relationships with many different groups - children, parents, teachers, management team).

Sarah Cavaliere  
School Project Manager  
English Martyrs' School, Southwark Hub

## **Appendix D: Wendy Smith**

4 MAR 2013



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27 February 2013

To Whom it May Concern

**RE: Testimonial for Niki Cooper**

Between 2008 and 2010 I completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling Children through Place2Be. Niki Cooper was the Programme Leader and lead tutor for the duration of the course.

As a tutor, Niki was inspiring to me from the start. Her obvious excitement about the course material was successfully passed on to the cohort and the seeds she planted in us began to grow from day one. There is always a curiosity about her - rather than assuming she knows the answer, she challenges herself and others to see it from another angle. Her manner inspires her students to think for themselves in a creative and intelligent way.

I felt believed-in from the start and somehow felt she could look at me and see the 'end result' even when I couldn't see it that clearly myself. Although I was part of the first cohort and Niki was honest about some of her fears and anxieties, she managed to hold the group in a very gentle yet firm way and mimicked what it might be like to have a 'good enough' parent. Niki is honest and direct and managed to deal with some very challenging group dynamics throughout the duration of the course in a professional, empathic way.

The training at Place2Be is integrative in nature; we were taught a very solid working model that we were able to experience in practice as a volunteer counsellor whilst training. Every place I have worked since being trained at Place2Be seems to need 'Place2Be-ifying'. I have had to go into play rooms and get rid of toys that were not necessarily therapeutic or revamp playrooms that just seem to be lots of junk thrown into a room for playing in. The value placed on the child's need for strict adherence to confidentiality has also been hard-wired in to me through my training. Luckily I have been involved with schools and organisations, up to now, who are quite happy to let me transform the room and the service we offer into something more acceptable to me as a counsellor. I believe my training helped me to have the confidence to know that my suggestions are valid.

The Place2be model makes sense and is very simple. It works. So much emphasis was placed during my training on the quality of the relationship between the client and the counsellor. The Place 2 be model supports the development of the relationship from the beginning to the ending.

I really am grateful for the solid grounding that was given to me through Niki at Place 2 be. As I grow as a counsellor I have developed my own unique ways of practising, but having Place2be as a foundation has been invaluable.

Niki didn't teach just through her words, but through her way of being and relating to us as her students.

If you require any further information, please contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Smith MBACP (Accred)

## ***Appendix E: Keren Richardson***

Keren Richardson  
166 West Grove  
Woodford Green  
London  
IG87NW  
[bkrich@talktalk.net](mailto:bkrich@talktalk.net)

14th February 2013

Niki Cooper  
Place2Be  
13/14 Angel Gate  
326 City Road  
London  
EC1V 2PT

To Whom it May Concern,

I have known Niki Cooper in her capacities as Programme Leader for Professional Qualifications and as my Tutor at Place2Be for six years. Throughout this period, I completed my qualifications in Counselling Children in Schools, including: Level 3 Foundation; Post Graduate; and Master of Arts. My training continues to have a positive affect, in both personal and professional aspects of my life.

When I started my journey at Place2Be, I was making the transition from teaching roles within primary education to counselling children in schools. In my role overseeing children with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties (EBSD) I often felt exhausted. During the initial stages of my training with Niki, it became apparent that I needed to set firmer boundaries within my work and adhere to them, including: communicating with the Head Teacher the importance of setting time-boundaries, so Learning Support Assistant's (LSA's) allocated work with vulnerable children was not interrupted. This helped children build trusting relationships with the staff they

worked with, rather than recreating situations where they felt letdown. This also included referring myself to a Behaviour Outreach Teacher for supervision on a weekly basis, which seemed a new initiative for teaching staff. This had a waterfall effect, as I was then able to provide supervision for the LSAs. I was able to use the knowledge and skills I gained from my courses to affect staff, children, and parents in two large primary schools. This included training teaching and support staff to: set clear and consistent boundaries; use the understanding of attachment theory to provide a better understanding of what children's behaviour was communicating; and provide strategies to help children manage their EBSD. My training enhanced my teaching of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), especially transferring ideas to the delivery of Circle Time. Place2Be courses encouraged me to have a more inquiring mind, rather than needing to have all the answers. This enabled me to ask more questions, and gather more useful information, to better support children with EBSD.

Niki's teaching has been invaluable in my current role as a School Counsellor. I work using child-led play and never cease to be amazed how this medium enables children to explore some of their deeper and more painful feelings. The integrative training equipped me with an eclectic bag of tools, which enables flexibility in my approach, including: Person-Centered; Psychoanalytic; elements of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy; and Solution Focused Therapy. This enables me to assess children's presenting issues and best meet their differing, individual needs. The training taught me to consider children's risk and resilience factors, and to build on children's strengths. This has helped me greatly in my work, to view the whole child, rather than get overwhelmed by their presenting issues. I feel the systemic aspect of my training has the greatest impact on my work as a School Counsellor, as I work closely with parents, teachers and external agencies to understand and view children more systemically and create opportunities for positive change in all systems. It is evident in my work that children make more progress when the different systems work together. The children I work with have made good progress, such as: improved ability in sharing their emotions and solving problems; better concentration and academic progress; improved social and communication skills, and increased self-esteem. As a result children often appear more settled in class, show a greater sense of belonging and are able to build friendships.

Place2Be's therapeutic approach is influenced by attachment theory and underpins my work as a School Counsellor. I feel this provides me with greater insight into the therapeutic relationship and the way children relate to others. I encourage all staff to read 'Attachment in the Classroom' by Ann Geddes to help them understand how

children transfer patterns of relating, and to implement some of her suggested strategies. The feedback from school staff, parents, children and external agencies has been extremely complimentary of my professional approach and expertise demonstrated in schools, which I believe is attributed to my high level of training at Place2Be (please see attached appendix).

In the future I am considering moving to Australia, where I hope to train teaching staff in a consultancy role. This will mean evaluating existing programmes for teaching staff in supporting children with EBSD, and to enhance them with new initiatives and ideas. The thorough training I received at Place2Be has provided me with substantial knowledge and skills, which has equipped me with confidence and expertise to fulfill this aspiration.

On a personal note my training changed my life, as it helped me face some of the more painful issues in my own life through therapy, giving me a stronger sense of self. I now recognise the importance of looking after myself and readily put into place structures to receive the level of support I need. Throughout my training, my self-awareness increased, through process hour, group dynamics and exploring feelings evoked in me. This increased my understanding of how I related to myself and others, therefore I take more responsibility for my actions and the impact they have.

It is difficult in this short testimonial to do the training provided by Niki at Place2Be justice, as it has been invaluable. It has enriched my life and continues to have a waterfall effect with people I meet, both personally and professionally. I am also grateful to Niki for the passion she has inspired in me for ongoing professional development. Before meeting Niki, I would have never considered completing a qualification at Masters level. I have incredible respect for Niki Cooper in her roles as Programme Leader for Professional Qualifications and as a Tutor at Place2Be. I have benefitted from her teaching, dynamic approach and achievements. Her authenticity, warm approach and support have been invaluable over the years I have known her.

Yours sincerely

Keren Richardson

School Counsellor (Diploma of Teaching, MA Counselling Children in Schools)

## ***Appendix F: Anne Rogerson***

As a graduate of Place2Be PG Counselling Children in Schools I have been inspired by the energy, knowledge and passion which Niki Cooper always brought to teaching sessions and a conviction in the benefits of delivering school-based therapeutic support to children and whole school communities. I am now working in a primary school delivering therapeutic interventions and am grateful to Niki for her belief in my ability (as a student) which gave me the confidence to aim high.

Although I have only been in post for a few weeks I already share Niki's passion for the work.

Anne Rogerson,

Post graduate 2009 - 2011

## ***Appendix G: Abigail Baah***

### Testimonial

One of the biggest learning curbs I have gained being a part of this programme has been the expansion of the exploration into my culture and its impact on my practice as a counsellor as well as that of my clients. Having been born and raised in Ghana, I understood the value of my culture. Niki's encouragement and drive to see culture not only thought about but implemented in practice has enabled me to feel confident enough to explore the many facets of culture when it comes to my practice. Informative and supportive conversations with Niki, allowed me to explore my culture in more depth which also created an the openness to the group with the consideration of the impact culture in practice. This sense of openness and exploration will be the foundation from which I will be able to practice as a counsellor in Ghana and well as other parts of the world. Understanding that while each theory has its value, the understanding of the culture of the individuals with whom I will work practice would impact on the therapeutic practice.

Abigail Baah (year 1 Postgraduate Diploma Student)

10.02.13



## **Appendix H: Sue Brown**

28.2.13

c/o Hunslet Moor Primary School  
Fairford Avenue  
Leeds.

To Whom It May Concern,

I took the Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling Children in Schools with the Place2Be. This course was lead by Niki Cooper. Over the two years of the training I had a lot of contact with Niki - both through the taught elements of the course and on a tutorial level.

The training and in particular Niki's input had a huge impact on me personally. Firstly I was able to become aware of the different factors that influence and lead to the development of individuals, models of therapeutic change and practical teaching on how to enable such change in others. This led me to a place where I became increasingly self aware and began to face a number of personal issues that had greatly limited my life up until this point. Throughout this process, I found Niki to be a source of constant support and positive influence. Niki communicated to me a sense of belief in me that encouraged me to continue with the difficult process that I had begun. She repeatedly made time to help me discuss various issues as they arose through the course and explore ways forward. This in turn led to me being able to become a better counsellor as I had been through the process of working through difficulties just as I would expect a client to. The result of the training was that following the course, my life, confidence and self esteem improved greatly. This process has continued after the end of the course to the point where I can now honestly say that many of the issues that restrained me for years no longer have the influence on me that they once had.

The teaching and make up of the course has provided me with the tools to become an effective counsellor with both children and young people. The course content was extremely broad but certainly did not lack depth. I learnt many things on the course which at the time I thought were not relevant to me (e.g. working with asylum seekers and refugees, cultural difference in counselling) which have actually turned out to be crucial in my current employment. As the course was a mixture of theory and skills I was able to not only learn the theory of counselling but work with other trainees in practising these skills and receiving feedback. The inclusion of case discussion groups allowed me to see a fusion between the reality of work in my placement with a broad range of theoretical ideas brought by others. Niki also designed the course in such a way as to constantly make me as a counsellor aware of my own processes and responses in the therapeutic setting. This included the use of Process Groups where we spent time discussing our own reactions to various elements of the course and all that brought with it. Niki also led the course to a high standard so that graduates were equipped to the highest possible standards. So for example, if I was in a tutorial with her she would not necessarily

provide me with the answers that I wanted to hear but often challenged me, my ways of thinking and responses.

As a result of the training that I received on the Diploma I have moved on to be employed in two positions at Place2Be. I undertook a year's contract as an Assistant Transition Project Manager. This role was based in a secondary school and involved a large amount of work with very challenging pupils (many of them excluded from full time education). I now am a School Project Manager at a Primary School where I oversee the project and supervise the Volunteer Counsellors. The school is in an area of high deprivation and consists of a highly multi-cultural population - over 30 languages are spoken in the school. I am responsible for carrying out assessments with pupils, teachers and parents, running therapeutic groups and 1 to 1 work with children. Since completing the Diploma I have also been involved in training youth workers in some therapeutic skills and theory. I would not have been able to do any of these things without the training and input from Niki. I consider the Place2Be Post Graduate Diploma to be the best training that I have been on. I travelled each week for two years from Sheffield to London just to do the course and believe that it was more than worth the effort. I also believe that Niki has had a profound influence on me and would still consider her as someone who I could turn to for professional advice and support should the need arise.

Yours

Sue Brown

School Project Manager

[spm.hunsletmoor@theplace2be.org.uk](mailto:spm.hunsletmoor@theplace2be.org.uk)

## **Appendix I: Basi Amodu's Supervisor**

Re. Basi Amodu.

From: Caroline Bennett –

Head of Services.

Catholic Children's Society

(Westminster)

I have known Basi since May 2012, as a Counsellor working in two schools within the Central London Counselling Service for The CCS(W).

Within that time I have been highly impressed with the quality of work that Basi is able to provide to the schools, the parents, the staff but most importantly the children with whom she sees on a regular basis.

Basi has a unique ability to communicate at all levels with genuine warmth and concern which makes her client's feel secure and listened to and believed.

Similarly, when language is difficult to express feelings, Basi is well equipped and experienced to work through play materials with the most positive of results.

Additionally, Basi is professional in keeping up to date and concise case-notes, and also providing necessary information both for the school and for the CCS(W) e.g. Annual Reports.

Basi will also works with the policies and procedures laid down by the Local Authorities, the Schools, and the CCS(W) and will appropriately consult on a need to know basis any issues regarding CP or Safeguarding.

Basi is totally committed and dedicated to her work and this is obvious. As an Agency we consider Basi to be a marvellous asset and a great ambassador for our charity.

I hope this gives some small glimps of the work undertaken by Basi on behalf of the CCS(W) and how much as a Counsellor she is valued by us.

Caroline Bennett

7:III.13

## ***Appendix J: Keren Richardson's Manager***

Phone conversation with my link person for my role as a School Counsellor. Her role in the school is Special Education Needs Coordinator (SenCo). In a brief phone conversation, I asked the following questions:

How does my training have an impact on my position as a School Counsellor?

What skills and knowledge do I bring to the job?

What difference does it make to children, staff and parents?

Response to questions:

"What is most noticeable is that you are not just a School Counsellor, as you are not blinkered in your approach. You provide advice and support in prioritising children with EBSD, so they receive the appropriate support. Even though you work in a deeper way with your clients, you bring a high level of professionalism and expertise from your training into the job, by providing a wealth of knowledge and experience. This affects a large number of children with EBSD and myself as the SenCo. You are available to discuss other children and won't just say "that is not one of my children," which helps me when I feel stuck in a rut. This means your knowledge makes a greater difference to the whole school system, which gives a greater sense of working together, rather than in isolation. It is evident you recognise the importance of being systemic in your approach, working with both the school and home. You establish good relationships and meet regularly with both teachers and parents to: inform them of the work without breaking confidentiality; gather information; and discuss strategies to help the child make progress. Both parents and teachers feel supported, which has greater impact on the children. You suggest other interventions which will help the vulnerable children you work, such as Circle of Friends or a social skills group implemented by LSAs and referrals to external agencies. This always feels like a fresh pair of eyes with expertise, considering the child more holistically. I appreciate putting our heads together with shared thinking, which lessens my anxieties as a SenCo. You are available to liaise with external agencies with the children you work with, to better support our most vulnerable and needy children. The children respond extremely well to counselling through play, as it offers a safe place to express their emotions. I have never heard a negative word from any of the children you have worked with and they appear value the service and really need it. It is a shame it isn't full-time in school. The children you work with make good progress. It is noticeable they are more able to deal with their emotions, take more responsibility for their actions and show increased self-esteem. You have broadened my thinking to recognise children's progress and to help them more fully in other areas of their lives, such as friendship groups. You are available to help me understand different issues children may face and I am more aware how children's early attachments may affect their behaviour and lives. Your holistic and systemic approach makes a difference to children, families and the whole school. Your support and advice is invaluable."

## ***Appendix K: Elaine Eisenthal (Supervisor)***

Testimony for Professional Doctorate: Niki Cooper

### Impact on the Organisation (Practice)

Niki has been working in Garfield Primary School weekly, as a volunteer counsellor seeing two children in one-to-one work, from January 2008 up to the present.

It is difficult to separate Niki's personal qualities from the impact I am sure she makes on the organisation as a whole, as it is the former that so strongly affects the latter. I know her as a former colleague and now as a supervisor of her clinical work in this school. The very fact that she has been doing this work so consistently, well before she planned to undertake this particular qualification, is a testimony to her energy and commitment to the clinical aspect of her role within Place2Be.

Niki has never allowed the other, perhaps seemingly more pressing, responsibilities of her job to affect her reliability and professionalism when it comes to her work with the children. Through this work she has had a major impact on the lives of those she has worked with, some of whom have presented with very challenging behaviours. She thinks deeply about the process, often reflecting on the theoretical material she is using in her training programme. At the same time she is able to be both nurturing and playful with the children in the therapy room. I know that she uses this ongoing experience to illustrate and enliven her teaching. She is well respected by the staff in the school and the fact that she is working here reflects well on the organisation as a whole, as it can be seen as an active demonstration of Place2Be's commitment to putting the welfare of individual children at the centre of its mission.

Elaine Eisenthal, BA, Dip Counselling, MSc.  
School Project Manager, Garfield Primary School

21 March 2013

## **Professional Doctorate Testimonial – Niki Cooper**

February 2013

I have known Niki Cooper since I first started work with Place2Be – initially as a Management Consultant from KPMG, and since 2003, in my role as Chief Operating Officer. I directly line managed Niki in 2010/11.

Niki demonstrates an extremely high standard of professionalism, with an attention to detail and quality which is admirable. As Programme Lead for Place2Be's Professional Qualifications Pathway (Taster Day, Access Course, Foundation, PgDip and Masters), Niki has had the vision, drive, energy, passion and the practical application required to turn her vision into a reality. She has built a team of programme tutors to deliver to the quality standards which she has set, in line with the programme validators and external accrediting bodies.

The Professional Qualifications Pathway plays a vital role in Place2Be's suite of services and means to achieve our mission – to enable emotional and therapeutic support to be provided to children in schools, based on a practical model backed up by research and training. The Pathway is the primary means to share our learning (based on practical experience of service delivery) with the wider workforce, equipping local communities and counselling professionals with the skills to work therapeutically with children and to do so in a means that is fully integrated and understanding of the school environment. Looking to the future, our training and Professional Qualifications, is a critical mechanism to enable Place2Be to scale our impact and support many thousands more children indirectly through the professionals we train.

Niki has always demonstrated high levels of care and commitment to the trainees, in an effort to ensure their experience on our programmes, at whichever level, is an extremely positive and 'high quality' one from which they can grow. In recent years, with the programmes well established and running smoothly, Niki has developed her business understanding and the broader requirements around longer term financial viability and sustainability. She has led on making necessary adaptations whilst carefully and thoughtfully balancing the student experience with financial viability.

She is proactive, highly diligent and committed. She has shown tremendous resilience and courage in managing the challenges which have arisen in the natural development of a suite of programmes of this nature.

Her role demands a high degree of organisation and strong administrative skills and Niki demonstrates these very ably. She is held in high regard by our external partner organisations (UEL, CPCAB) as well as our external advisers.

Niki is a hugely valuable member of the Place2Be team and has had a very great impact on Place2Be, our professionalism and ability to achieve our mission.

Catherine Roche  
Chief Operating Officer, Place2Be  
25 February 2013

## ***Appendix M: Benita Refson Place2Be CEO (now President)***

13 February 2013

### **Testimonial: Niki Cooper**

To whom it may concern:

Since 1994 when the Place2Be charity was founded the focus has been on building a scalable replicable model addressing the mental health needs of children in schools across the UK. Place2Be now has 19 year's practical evidence-based experience of school-based service delivery. Place2Be currently operates in over 170 primary and secondary schools reaching 68,000 children. The coming year will see services extended to over 200 schools.

The work involves over 250 paid clinicians and 750 volunteer counsellors and therapists. Underpinning everything we do and at the very heart of our thinking is the quality of the work: The training, professional understanding and expertise of our workforce. This is where Niki Cooper has played a transformational role. Niki's dogged determination to develop Place2Be's PGDip and Masters programme in Counselling Children in Schools, her focus on quality, research and development required to ensure that these qualifications gained the respect of the validating body at UEL and other professionals in the therapy and counselling arena was tireless.

As the founding Trustee and Chief Executive since the charity's inception it was an act of faith to support Niki's passionate request to develop a much needed training specifically focusing on developing a skilled cohort of child counsellors specifically skilled to work within the school context. Niki's professional integrity, endless sense of enquiry and personal commitment to ensuring the content and delivery of the Professional Qualifications pathway from Level 2 through to MA and ensuring the quality of delivery is consistently exemplary.

It leaves me with an enormous sense of pride for being associated with her and an enduring respect and admiration for the transformational contribution Niki Cooper has made to Place2Be.



## **Appendix N: Peter Wilson**

### Testimonial on Niki Cooper

By Peter Wilson BA, DipSoc.Studies, MACP  
Clinical Adviser, Place2Be  
Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist.

I have known Niki Cooper for seven years in my capacity as Clinical Adviser to Place2Be. I met her initially when she was a School Project Manager in a school in Enfield. Later, I became more involved with her as she set up a new Post Graduate Diploma and Masters training course in Place 2Be in Counselling Children in Schools. I have given her professional support as this course developed, first being validated by the University of East London and later accredited by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). The course has now been running for five years, the latest cohort of trainees beginning last September. I currently provide supervision to Niki and her two course trainers. 3 students have now achieved a Masters Degree

In addition, Niki has been responsible for establishing and running a professional qualification pathway consisting of a series of courses for people who have shown interest in developing a career in counselling. Most important amongst these courses is the Foundation Course, a fifteen week training experience that, upon graduation, qualifies trainees to work voluntarily as an individual counselor in a Place2Be school. Once completed a year of this experience, many go on to enter the Post Graduate course.

In my view, Niki has been inspirational in conceiving, designing and delivering these training courses. This has been a substantial piece of work on her part, culminating in a Post Graduate Diploma and Masters training that has earned a high national reputation. There can be no doubt that she has been a major influence in the lives of all her trainees – 75 Post Graduate trainees and ? Foundation course trainees so far in total. They respect her knowledge, her leadership, her thoroughness, her enthusiasm and her encouragement. Others, University personnel, members of Place2Be staff, outside speakers – have been similarly impressed.

From a national point of view, the courses that she has established are highly valued not only for their excellent quality but also for their contribution in the broad landscape of counselling and psychotherapy. I would like in particular to highlight two aspects of the Post Graduate Diploma and Masters training which I think are of importance in contributing and influencing the landscape of child counselling and psychotherapy.

The first has to do with increasing training of child, as different from, adult counselors and psychotherapists. The second refers to the experiential and integrative nature of the training which she devised.



When Niki began working in Place2Be, there were only a few training courses that focused on counselling and psychotherapy with children. By 1988, the BACP had accredited 82 counselling courses nationwide. All of these were involved in working with adults. No more than 6 other trainings worked with children. This reflected a general trend in counselling and psychotherapy throughout the twentieth century privileging adults over children. By and large, work with children was seen to carry lower status than that with adults.

However, evidence accumulated that many adult mental health problems have their roots in childhood emotional disturbance and that early intervention in the lives of children in their homes, nursery schools and primary schools need to be a major priority in social policy and government investment. The training that Niki created and developed clearly has a very important part to play in building a national workforce that can adequately meet the needs of emotionally distressed children at an early age.

Niki brought into her conception of training a great deal of her experience working therapeutically with children in Place2Be. The course was designed to incorporate what she felt was crucial in effective therapeutic work. The importance of communicating through play in a safe and positive counselling relationship with children she saw as fundamental. So too did she see the importance of self awareness in the counselor to ensure that the counselor was sufficiently receptive to the needs of the children who they were helping. These therapeutic elements she saw as leading to change in the child and with this in mind she designed her course to make sure trainees understood their importance

Another key feature of the course was its integrative philosophy. Niki thought it important that trainees learnt about child development from a variety of theoretical perspectives. She also wanted her trainees to build their knowledge through experiential learning as well as theoretical reading, writing and discussion. Through the observation of infants and primary school children, through the writing of a personal journal and through various group events, she ensured that trainees were brought to appreciate and understand the emotional struggles and conflicts that underlay children's difficulties.

Whilst these aspects of training have been developed in other trainings, I think that Niki has uniquely created a training which takes further the possibilities of learning and application in clinical work. It is her conviction, enthusiasm and energy that has led to such an innovative training.

The building up of this training has consumed much of her time and to date she has not been able to establish her presence at a international level. She has however written together with Kelli Swain –Cowper, a chapter in a book on counselling to be published in this coming year. The chapter describes the philosophy and practice of the Post Graduate training which should be of interest to an international readership.

## ***Appendix O: Kelli Swain-Cowper***

The following is a testimonial for Niki Cooper addressing the impact that her professional and personal qualities have had on the organisation and the practice within the Place2Be as experienced by myself, Kelli Swain-Cowper, co-author of the Postgraduate diploma curriculum and Lead Year 1 Tutor.

I have known of Niki Cooper within the organisation throughout the years as a generally well-regarded and respected School Project Manager who had come to the organisation shortly after I began my employment in 2001, though we had little direct contact until our co-leading of an attachment training together a number of years later as sessional trainers for the Place2Be. Both well-established sessional trainers, we found in each other an enthusiasm for the training programmes, a desire to innovate and invigorate the learners and a playfulness with the 'script' which allowed us to stay true to the essence of the content, but add variations of both theory and direction which enlivened the programme for the day and made it more relevant to the practice in the field. I will remember this first training together as I found that I greatly respected Niki's thirst for innovative knowledge and willingness to push the boundaries of the learning to more progressive areas such as neuroscience and application of attachment theories to classroom learning. These areas of knowledge are now widely accepted in the field, however, in 2006 (7) in the Place2be, the organisation was slow and resistant to embracing any solid theoretical underpinning and even more reticent about innovations in the professional field. It was at this time, that I believe Niki and I discovered that our different strengths made a powerful team that created a programme which has, in turn, evolved a powerful and influential programme leader and who in combination has effected the therapeutic practice across the organisation through policy and through extending her innovative voice into many of the trainings that occur throughout the organisation.

Niki's diligence, perseverance, determination, hardwork and dedication to the task has been absolutely the driving force behind the development of the postgraduate diploma which, in turn, was the doorway for Niki to find her voice and power within the organisation to influence its policy and practice. Her battle through validation, through accreditation, through revalidation and upkeep of these professional standings which give the programme credibility in the field have been hard won and fought for with tenacity, charm, intelligence, many detailed forms and much humility. Though backed by the organisation and other clinical minds, Niki was the public face and voice who challenged both the accrediting bodies, dubious and supportive established professionals and institutions in the field, sought out influential supporters

and linked them all together with the Place2Be. The process, though certainly not planned to be as it was, often led Niki back to the Place2be with challenges for the managers, clinicians and business leaders to conjugate and deliver change. This process has seen Niki evolve in confidence and competence in negotiating with complex organisations to bring a more coherent vision to the clinical work with children.

This process has been a reflexive process, by which it is difficult to unweave any individual influence from an other. It has been a willingness to be guided by Niki, by the organisation, by many professionals, by Uel and her willingness to be guided by others that have led to the greatest impact on practice. This is a complicated, sophisticated and nuanced skill which may lack the grandiose air of a more narcissistic character, but has achieved influence on the training of many professionals through from the introductory course to the master's level. Backed up by the merit of the work of the charity itself, the quality of the programmes delivered, Niki has gradually won the Place2be an established programme in the field and a well-respected reputation as an institution for learning.

Niki's efforts and seeking of new boundaries to challenge and new knowledge to incorporate are endless as she is continually seeking ways to innovate and bring new knowledge to practice. Her enthusiasm for new knowledge and new perspectives enliven debates and inspire those around her to find ways to integrate these new perspectives into an existing body of knowledge. These energies and enthusiasms bring fresh life into many levels of the organisation which ultimately effects the practice with children

Niki is in the process of solidifying and enhancing the public voice beyond the institution of The Place2be, though her reach as programme leader has most certainly had an impact on the professional field of working with children on a local and national level.

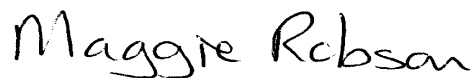
## **Appendix P: Dr Maggie Robson**

12<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### **Niki Cooper: Programme Leader for Professional Qualifications**

Niki's work developing the professional qualifications pathway for Place2Be has, in my view, contributed to the raising of standards in delivering therapeutic work with children in the UK and, potential, internationally. Traditionally, working with children has not been thought to need specialised training and expertise and a myth exists that any therapist, whatever their training, can be effective. This is not true as particular skills and knowledge are essential in order to work effectively in this area and Niki's leadership in the development of professional qualifications for working with children has contributed greatly to changing the landscape in counselling children.

Her experience and willingness to work collaboratively has lead to a training framework which is both robust and fit for purpose and provides a standard for other trainings to aspire to. Uniquely, Niki combines attention to detail with therapeutic experience, passion and academic rigour to provide the bedrock and the driving force of the training. As the External Examiner of the Place2Be Postgraduate Diploma and MA in Counselling Children in Schools since its launch in 2008, I am continually impressed by Niki's exemplary paper work and audit trail and feel that without her drive, commitment and energy, children's counselling would be the poorer.



Dr Maggie Robson

Cert. Ed., B.A., M.A., Ph.D., Dip. Play Therapy., C.Couns.Psychol., BACP  
Registered Counsellor., UKRC Registered Independent Counsellor., C. Sci., Fellow  
of the Higher Education Academy, HCPC Registered Counselling Psychologist

## **Appendix Q: Prof David Rose (former Dean of Psychology UEL) & Aneta Tunariu UEL Link tutor and Head of Subject Area**

### **SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.  
uel.ac.uk/psychology



**March 12<sup>th</sup> 2013**

**RE:                   Testimonial for Niki Cooper – Programme Leader for Professional Qualifications, Place2Be**

We are very happy to write in support of the Doctoral submission being made by Niki Cooper, the Programme Leader for Professional Qualifications, at Place2Be. As the former Dean of the School of Psychology at the University of East London (Professor David Rose) and the Head of Subject Area for Psychological Interventions (Dr Aneta Tunariu), it is our opinion that Niki has personally had a significant impact on individuals, organisations and the national (and, to an extent, the international) landscape in child counselling.

For many years the School of Psychology at the University of East London (UEL) had, as part of its mission, the aim to become the premier department in the UK for postgraduate professional training in psychology. To that end the School, over many years, has developed and refined postgraduate training courses in all the main areas of postgraduate professional psychology, as well as in counselling, psychotherapy, and coaching. Within the counselling area a distinctive aspect of the School's agenda has been to develop links with external course providers such as Relate, the

Psychosynthesis and Education Trust, East London and City Mental Health Trust, Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships and Refugee Therapy Centre, amongst others. In 2007 the School was approached by the Chief Executive of Place2Be seeking university quality assurance and course validation for a new addition to its professional training programmes, a postgraduate diploma. This was a natural progression from the Level 3 counselling skills courses which Place2Be had offered for many years, and continues to offer, as a specialist training package for its volunteer counsellors placed in schools and skill-building for people in local communities. Niki's pedagogical and professional

expertise was very much at the heart of this new development. Place2Be's Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling Children in Schools was launched in September 2008 and subsequently a Masters programme in February 2010. The Postgraduate Diploma programme was awarded professional accreditation by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) in June 2011 and continues to prosper and train new generations of counsellors specialised in working with children and young people in a non-intrusive yet highly transformative way. This academic year (2012 – 2013) saw the recruitment of a 5<sup>th</sup> cohort of students onto the programme.

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Throughout the School's partnership with Place2Be Niki, as the Programme Director for Professional Qualifications, has been our chief point of contact within Place2Be. Our intention in establishing external partnerships in the area of counselling training was to ensure a "real world" focus for this part of our professional training portfolio. As our teaching provisions broadened, so did the number and range of staff specialisms. The collaboration with Place2Be is particularly contextualized by the long standing expertise in delivering counselling and psychotherapy training at different levels from BSc to Professional Doctorate. As such in beginning our partnership with Place2Be we were in a position to expand the meaning of a training collaboration beyond the immediate requirements of the accreditation and quality assurance processes. For example, the school's Institute for Research into Child Development has offered input during the formative stages of establishing the Place2Be research agenda.

With Place2Be there was and continues to be a deliberate working together to ensure dynamic and beneficial collaboration between staff of the School and Place2Be. Niki has always embraced this way of working and, indeed, demonstrated determination and considerable sensitivity in facilitating a collaborative approach. Niki's approach, knowledge and experience, for example, have made her a leading influence on the research focused aspect of Place2Be's postgraduate training. From the outset Niki has worked with the UEL academic staff who deliver the research methods teaching on the Masters programme. Her work is neatly scheduled within the lecture programme with the aim of further contextualising research philosophy and concepts within the process of providing counselling for children. This aspect of Niki's contribution to training helps legitimise for the students the crucial importance of an evidence-based approach to counselling. Together with UEL research supervisors, Niki monitors the research students' efforts in applying their empirical findings to expanding Place2Be's theoretical model and ways of working. Niki leads by example with regards to employing empirical work to lead theory development, and personal and professional growth. For example, in 2012 the training staff at Place2Be have adjusted the theoretical model underpinning their unique provision in the light of systematic observations of their operations, including detailed feedback from service users, their families and other stakeholders.

There have been and continue to be genuine opportunities for colleagues from the two institutions to exchange ideas and draw on each other's expertise. In recognition of Niki's pioneering work in the area of developing child counselling training, her advice was sought in the early stages of designing a

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new module addressing concepts and training of skills specific to counselling children and young people. Likewise the innovative structure of the course Niki has designed at Place2Be, where rigor and flexibility feature alongside one another, has inspired modifications and additions to our existing counselling programmes at UEL (for example, the use of play in experiential workshops and the use of art therapy in working with trauma).

Under Niki's leadership the Place2Be's postgraduate training programmes in child counselling have had a significant impact not only on UEL's School of Psychology and its staff but have become recognised nationally as a benchmark for national quality in voluntary sector counselling training. Likewise, the External Examiner for her particular specialism in Counselling Children has consistently praised the excellent teaching practices and student experience on the Place2Be Postgraduate Diploma and has identified Niki's theoretical, clinical and pedagogical leadership as a core driver for this success. The professional training model developed under Niki's leadership has also had a profound influence on Place2Be's counselling training at all levels within her organisation.

**Dr Aneta Tunariu**

Principal Lecturer in Psychology and Counselling  
Head of Subject for Psychological Interventions

**Professor F D Rose**

Emeritus Professor  
Former Dean of the School of Psychology and Pro Vice-Chancellor

## **Appendix R: Prof Mick Cooper**

16<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013

### **Re Testimonial for Niki Cooper**

I have been asked to provide a testimonial statement to support the work of Niki Cooper in her contribution to the landscape and practice of child counselling in the UK.

Ms Cooper is Programme Leader for Professional Qualification for Place2Be, one of the key providers of counselling and emotional support to primary school children in the UK. This organisation is very well-placed to deliver training to counsellors who are wishing to work with children, and is, to my knowledge, one of the central providers of this training – possibly the only training in the UK which specifically focuses on counselling work with younger children.

I understand that the Place2Be's professional qualifications pathway was developed by Niki Cooper and her team. This training has come to underpin and support the work of Place2Be and its contribution to the skills of practitioners working in this sector in the UK. I understand that the course is accredited and validated by the BACP, CPCAB and UEL, indicating that it is of a high level of rigour and quality.

This training offer an accessible starting point for those wishing to pursue a career in counselling children as well as being a stand-alone qualification for those wanting to improve their communication with children. In this respect, the training brings counselling skills to everyday work with children along with more professional practice.

The programme, leading to a Master's research module, provides an important source of research training for counsellors to develop evidence-based thinking and practice. In this respect, again, it is relatively unique in a training specifically oriented to counselling work with children, and has the potential to make an important contribution to developing research and practice in the field.

In summary, the work of Ms Cooper has led to the development of a training programme that is relatively unique in the UK, and can make an important contribution to the development of emotional health and wellbeing of British children.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss any aspect of this further.

Yours sincerely



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Mick Cooper, Professor of Counselling



**Appendix S: Fiona Ballantyne Dykes (CPCAB)**



**P O Box 1768, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8YP**

**Tel: 01458 850350 Fax: 01458 852055**

**Email: [admin@cpcab.co.uk](mailto:admin@cpcab.co.uk) [www.cpcab.co.uk](http://www.cpcab.co.uk)**

Testimonial for Professional Doctorate by Public Works for:

Niki Cooper (Training)  
Programme Leader for Professional Qualifications  
13/14 Angel Gate, 326 City Road,  
London, EC1V 2PT  
T: 020 7923 5534  
[www.place2be.org.uk](http://www.place2be.org.uk)

25<sup>th</sup> February 2013

**To whom it may concern**

Niki has played a key personal role in creating a coherent and comprehensive pathway for counselling children which starts at level 2 and ends at Masters level (level 7).

She has worked with CPCAB which is a specialist Ofqual regulated awarding body approved to offer qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to establish the pre-HE stage of this pathway. This has involved creating new units and qualifications at level 2, 3 and 4 which meet national occupational standards and sector guidance for working with children. In addition the new qualifications are now located within an overarching nationally recognised practitioner development framework which takes account of the latest research that makes counselling effective. These new qualifications are verified and awarded by CPCAB, the largest and only specialist awarding organisation for counselling.

The new qualifications are:

- Level 2 Award for Counselling Work with Children - Access (QCF)
- Level 2 Certificate for Counselling Work with Children - Foundation (QCF)
- Level 3 Certificate for Counselling Work with Children - Foundation (QCF)
- Level 4 Certificate for Counselling Children (QCF)

Other benefits of establishing this particular progression route include:

- Widening participation - because the new QCF qualifications are now eligible for public funding and 24+ advanced learning loans for level 3 and 4.

- Offering credit based qualifications where credit may be used towards other QCF qualifications on the framework.

This is the first national progression route for counselling children, which used to be a mixture of agency training, individual tutor expertise within specific training courses and post qualifying CPD.

/continued ...

This pathway will not only have a lasting influence on Place2be's own training but it sets a benchmark for other trainings in the future.

CPCAB contributed the overarching framework and qualification expertise but Niki provided the subject expertise, delivery and practitioner expertise which shaped the units and qualifications and associated assessment strategy. Most importantly she had a vision of what could be done and what was needed to achieve this and she was the person who made it happen.



Fiona Ballantine Dykes  
Head of Qualifications  
Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)  
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## **Appendix T: Monica Lanyado**

### **Testimonial for Niki Cooper, Place2Be**

I have known of Place2Be's work for many (I think at least twelve) years having supervised a number of their counsellors. During this time I have been delighted to see how the organisation has matured and prospered, offering thoughtful and boundaried counselling for many children who would not otherwise ever access this kind of help.

Over the past 4 years, I have contributed to the training programme and been impressed with the way it has been structured and the quality and range of previous experience of the students. They bring a variety of life experience and professional life, which is respected and built on through their training. This is a course that expects a lot of the students and from my experience of teaching them, they really rise to this challenge.

I know there is a vast amount of work involved in getting accreditation, on top of all the careful planning that goes into deciding on an appropriate curriculum for such a training - that is both appropriate to the task, and yet stretches and stimulates the students.

My experience of Niki Cooper's development of the training is that she is dedicated to this task and is succeeding, despite all the difficulties, in building a valuable tailored training for primary school counsellors which has much to offer to the children who seek Place2Be's help.

Monica Lanyado

Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist.

Training Supervisor British Foundation of Psychotherapy(formerly BAP)

Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Training.

Author of *The Presence of the Therapist* (2004), co-editor with Ann Horne of *The Handbook of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy* (1999 and 2009), *A Question of Technique* (2006), *Through Assessment to Consultation* (2009), *Winnicott's Children* (2012)

**Appendix U: Emilia Dowling**

05 MAR 2013

**Emilia Dowling MSc, C.Psychol., AFBPsS**  
**Chartered Clinical Psychologist**  
**Systemic Psychotherapist**  
29 Lynmouth Road  
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**TESTIMONIAL**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

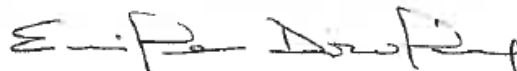
I am delighted to have the opportunity to give a testimonial for Niki Cooper in support of her professional doctorate.

I have known Niki since I became a visiting Lecturer to the training of counsellors offered by The Place2Be. I have been most impressed by the care and thoughtfulness that Niki has demonstrated in the organisation and provision of the training. I have been delighted to be part of a project where the counselling of children takes places in the school setting, where children spend so much of their lives, rather than in the remote context of a private consulting room.

As a systemic psychotherapist I have been impressed by the way in which the trainee counsellors develop an awareness of the school system rather than focus on the individual child in isolation. This is due in no small part to Niki's foresight and systemic way of thinking. I have valued Niki's enthusiasm and commitment to the training and thanks to her efforts the trainees are developing an innovative way of thinking and practicing which will benefit many children, families and schools in years to come.

I highly recommend Niki for the professional doctorate she is undertaking and commend her involvement and contribution to the Place2Be training programme.

Yours sincerely,



Emilia Dowling, MSc, C.Psychol, AFBPsS  
Chartered Clinical Psychologist and Systemic Psychotherapist

***Appendix V: Renos Papadopoulos: Essex University***

**Renos K Papadopoulos, PhD**

20 Woodruffe Road, London E11 1AH. Tel. (44 - 020) 8556 3180

Email: [renos@essex.ac.uk](mailto:renos@essex.ac.uk)

Professor of Analytical Psychology  
Director:  
Centre for Trauma, Asylum and Refugees  
University of Essex.  
Honorary Clinical Psychologist and Systemic Psychotherapist:  
The Tavistock Clinic, London.

*Chartered Psychologist / Registered Clinical  
Psychologist, B.P.S., A.F.B.P.S., H.P.C.  
Analytical Psychologist, I.A.A.P., U.K.C.P.  
Training and Supervising Analyst, I.G.A.P.  
Systemic Family Psychotherapist, T.S.P.*

5 April 2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have known Niki Cooper for about four years, since she first invited me to offer a seminar at 'The Place2Be' as part of the 'Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling Children in Schools' that is offered in conjunction with the University of East London. The theme of my annual seminar is 'Working with Involuntarily Dislocated Persons: issues of diversity and cultural competence'.

On the basis of my overall contact with Ms Cooper, I strongly support her application for a Professional Doctorate by Public Works from Middlesex University.

More specifically, I have been impressed by the way that she has been able to develop the Diploma course with a remarkable combination of sound academic content and practice relevance within the context of intercultural sensitivity. Due to her efforts and the quality of the course itself (both in terms of organizational as well as professional excellence), she succeeded in obtaining University validation for it at a postgraduate level.

The postgraduate Diploma course Ms Cooper developed is unique in many ways. It is offered by a service delivery organisation (i.e. 'The Place2Be') that now has its own full professional qualifications pathway which is rooted in practice and accessible to a diverse range of participants. There are very few trainings which specialise in working with children and none apart from that of 'The Place2Be' that are based in an organisation which offers an emotional support service to schools.

Despite my tight timetable, I have accepted to offer my annual seminar to the course because I value highly both the course and Ms Cooper, who succeeded in attracting excellent students; I always enjoy my interaction with them – they are thoughtful, sensitive, reflective, intelligent, challenging and committed. Moreover, I am always aware that these students will make a significant contribution to thinking and practice

in the field of counselling children and especially counselling in school settings and thus have a considerable impact in raising national standards.

Ms Cooper is a serious professional who combines expertise with sensitivity, creativity with effectiveness, rigour with flexibility and reliability with inventiveness. She is an experienced and competent practitioner and academic with a proven record of significant achievements.

It is for these reasons that I strongly recommend her for a Professional Doctorate by Public Works from Middlesex University.

Upon request, I will be most willing to provide additional information and clarification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R.K. Papadopoulos". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

## ***Appendix W: Jean Gibb (Hub/Cluster Manager)***

### **Professional Doctorate Testimonial for Niki Cooper**

In my opinion Niki Cooper, as the Programme Leader for Professional Qualifications at Place2Be, has made a significant impact in the field of child counselling. As Hub Manager in Brent I have had experience of students from the PG Diploma and Level 3 courses on placement in our schools since the training was set up. Students from this course are always welcomed and highly valued by School Project Managers, who manage the service in schools, and by school staff. This is a result of the way the course has been set up and run and the qualities and skills the students demonstrate in which Niki has been the major influence.

Niki's understanding of how counselling in schools works and her in-depth knowledge and experience of working therapeutically with children is evident in the way the course has been set up and tailored specifically to counselling children in a school setting. Students are carefully and rigorously selected, they are clear that this is the area they want to work in and are highly committed. They understand the role a counselling service plays in a school, issues around confidentiality and safeguarding, how attachment theory applies, the impact on children moving between different systems, and the importance of consistency and reliability. Therefore they bring a solid foundation of understanding when they begin working with children.

Niki's knowledge and understanding of the practice of counselling in schools means that the skills practice on the course reflects as closely as possible the work that the counsellors are undertaking in school. Students have the opportunity to role play a child they are working with which helps deepen their understanding and gives them a sense of what it may feel like to be in the 'child's shoes'. This can have a direct impact on the way they work with a child or their way of being with them, deepening the relationship between them and the child. The students can bring case discussions to the course and use the learning from this in their work with children and in supervision in school. The students understand the use of weekly supervision and use this effectively to deepen their understanding and develop their work with children alongside their own professional development.

Niki works closely with the placement managers in schools and keeps up to date with students' progress and developments in the field. This means that students are exceptionally well supported and their professional development is accelerated, enabling their work to be richer and more valuable to the children.

Niki's personal qualities of compassion and understanding, with clear communication, being approachable, ready to listen and quick to respond have been a key element in the success of the placements. This has meant that when



challenges have arisen they have been dealt with professionally and thoroughly. The safety of the work has always been paramount and the impact on all concerned taken into account and responded to sensitively and appropriately. In a particularly complex and difficult situation a few years ago Niki demonstrated strong, consistent boundaries with a complete commitment to high standards and excellent practice. I was very impressed with how she dealt with this and have great respect with how well this was handled by her.

PG Diploma students are committed, enthusiastic and view the placement as a great learning opportunity. They demonstrate professionalism, a thorough therapeutic understanding and approach to working with children and are totally reliable and committed. These qualities have a strong impact on their work and mean they can start work at a deeper level and with children with more complex needs than other students on placement. They are able to manage the clear consistent boundaries needed in working with children with high levels of emotional and behaviour issues. In Brent we have been particularly fortunate in that several PG Diploma students have chosen to stay on beyond their placement for an extra year or two, demonstrating their high level of commitment to the work and greatly benefitting the children and the school environment.

A wider influence of PG Diploma students in schools is their ability to share their knowledge with teaching and non-teaching staff. The course provides them with the confidence and ability to share their skills in the broader context, thus benefitting children across the whole school. Niki has been instrumental in inspiring students, encouraging and supporting them in their work and providing them with relevant skills and knowledge and, through their excellent practice, raising awareness across communities about child mental health.

Jean Gibb  
Hub Manager, Brent

**Appendix X: Sarah Kendrick (Hub/Cluster Manager, now Head of Services South)**

**Making a lifetime of difference to children in schools**

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Tel: 020 7923 5500 Fax: 020 7833 8083 Email: [enquiries@theplace2be.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@theplace2be.org.uk)



I am a Hub Manager for Place2Be, managing a cluster of school-based projects in Shoreditch, London and have been with the organisation for 11 years. I welcome this opportunity to reflect on the contribution Niki Cooper has made in developing services within Place2Be that have enhanced our profile and the service we deliver.

The Professional Qualifications programme has very effectively developed a cohort of dynamic and high functioning students contributing to service delivery as Volunteer Counsellors in Place2Be projects. Currently, there are 8 past or present students from the Level 3 and Post Graduate Diploma (PG Dip) programmes working in schools in the Shoreditch hub. Their impact has been very distinct and is seen both in clinical as well as in operational delivery terms. I will describe some of the elements of this impact as I see them, before looking at Niki's personal effectiveness and impact on the organisation's work in schools and on the organisation as a whole.

Our experience in Shoreditch - across the board - is that students from Place2Be professional trainings feel anchored in the organisation and carry with them an affinity towards it which enables them to settle within a project with some ease. They are equipped early in their learning with an understanding of the organisation's mission, purpose, structure, ethos and service-delivery model. Students from the Level 3 and PG Dip courses have been universally well-disposed towards the vagaries and particular character of in-school therapeutic delivery: children missing counselling sessions for school trips at short notice, teachers asking for information about children's sessions in the midst of a busy staffroom for example. Niki and her Programme Tutor colleagues have experience of project delivery within Place2Be and are able to model and communicate an accepting and constructive approach to these unusual and specific contextual challenges. In terms of widening access to the world of work in schools, the courses offer unique preparation as PG Dip students are ahead of their contemporaries in terms of readiness for professional practice by the end of their course.

Students from the Level 3 and PG Dip programmes have shown a high degree of self-reflective ability. As clinicians, we tend to assume that this is a quality that all counsellors working with children and in a professional training in counselling or psychotherapy will bring to their placement and we are often disappointed. Managers in school have frequently taken additional

time out of bursting schedules to encourage students from other courses to develop this quality because it is the foundation on which clinical competence is built. Technique can be learned 'on the job' but self-reflection needs to be nurtured and developed. For Place2Be students, self-reflection is a pre-requisite and an expectation and they learn to apply it to their work as a matter of course. My perception is that it is taken very seriously, linked as it is with the understanding that we are asking our child clients to undertake a similar inward exploration. It is this nuance that has distinguished Place2Be trained Counsellors from many others. Translated into the clinical work, PG Dip and Level 3 students have been able to get to some relational depth with clients in a shorter period of time than have many others on comparable courses. In school, with time-limited interventions and a drive for increasingly speedy throughput of cases, this is an enormous positive.

Connected to students' self-reflective ability is a facility to critically assess their own skills and competencies. Students who can acknowledge the areas of their skills development that need attention and improvement move on far more rapidly than those who do not have this insight, or those in whom this insight is not adequately encouraged or facilitated. In our experience within Shoreditch of PG Dip students, the output and clinical impact of students with a well-developed and balanced sense of self criticism and autonomy is always greater than those who lack this and the impact on the quality of service delivery, as well as on swift allocation of the more challenging cases is very positive. End of term placement reviews for PG Dip students are carefully structured so that the School Project Manager (who has supervisory and managerial oversight) appraises the trainee's skills three times during the first year of their placement (a higher level than on most comparable courses). Discussion and preparation is built in for both the students and the manager, as is feedback to Diploma tutors by the manager and student, making for a comprehensive and most importantly, discursive appraisal. The pro-forma for the review is a very effective tool, offering structure for both narrative and scaled feedback. I have found that this tool very effectively elicits all of the information required for students at all stages of their development and School Project Managers in Shoreditch have begun to use it to appraise the performance of students from other courses.

The competencies mentioned here that have characterised students from Place2Be's professional qualifications programmes are very clearly reflective not only of the programme structure but of the tenor of teaching and communication to students and partners within the wider organisation. What can be called the 'culture' of the programme, developed and led by Niki, is felt and demonstrable all along the line. Niki's communications, whether by email, telephone or in person are always professional, clear and warm. She welcomes challenge and feedback and when in conversation about issues arising for students on placement or their supervisors, she makes herself readily available to support them or to provide information. Niki's skilled communication and supportive, transparent approach models for the student the calm, reflective stance that we are looking for in their therapeutic work.

Niki's development of the professional qualifications programme at Place2Be has been instrumental in raising the organisational profile nationally and has equipped us with a potential future workforce as well as an additional unique selling point. Most importantly, in my direct experience, it has also extended our reach and the quality of our work in schools. Sarah Kendrick 20 February 2013